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The AZTECS

(INDIAN RACES)

BY

A. VAN DOREN HONEYMAN

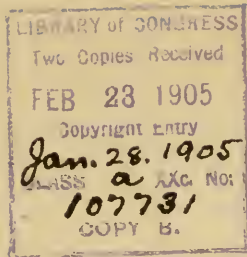
Author of "Bright Days" Series



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*There Aztlan stood upon the farther shore:
Amid the shade of trees its dwellings rose,
Their level roofs with turrets set around,
And battlements all burnished white, which shone
Like silver in the sunshine. I beheld
The imperial city, her far-circling walls,
Her garden groves and stately palaces,
Her temples mountain size, her thousand roofs;
And when I saw her might and majesty
My mind misgave me, then.*

— Southey's "Madoc," Part 1, Canto 6.

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THE AZTECS

(INDIAN RACES)

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A. VAN DOREN HONEYMAN

THE AZTECS. By THE EDITOR.

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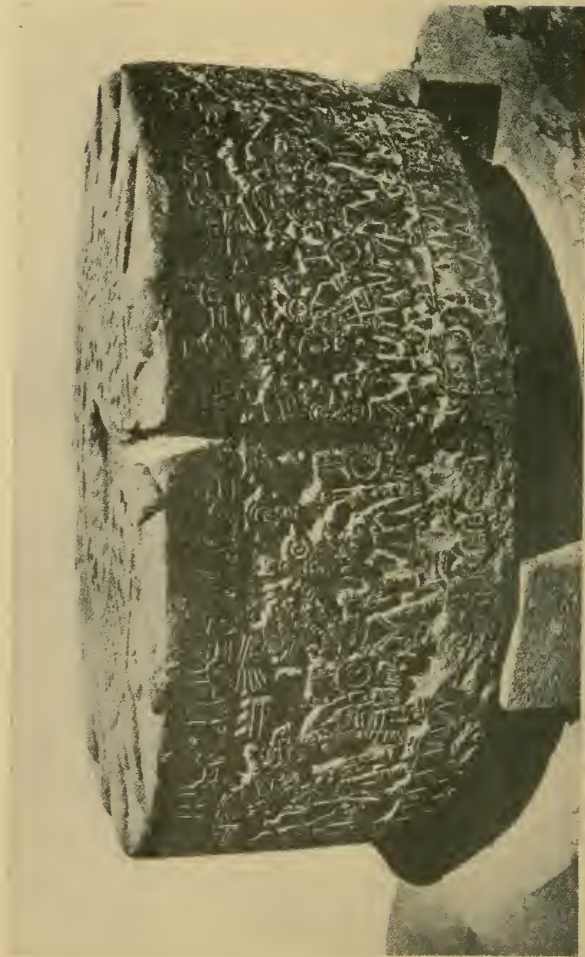
JAPAN, the Flowery Kingdom.

VOYAGES TO THE NORTH POLE.

EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANOES.

Etc., Etc., Etc.





The "Sacrificial Stone" of the Aztecs.



“Creation’s heir, the world, the world is mine.”

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE AZTECS

(1090-1521)

Preliminary Word.—“ My beloved daughter, very dear little dove, you have already heard and attended to the words which your father has told you. They are precious words, and such are rarely spoken or listened to. . . . My dear daughter, whom I tenderly love, see that you live in the world in peace, tranquility and contentment, all the days that you shall live. See that you disgrace not yourself, that you stain not your honor, nor pollute the lustre of fame of your ancestors.” Such are the beginning and the ending of the written advice of an Aztec mother to her first-born daughter, written probably five hundred years ago—almost a century before Columbus discovered America—when the various Indian tribes inhabiting the lands now occupied by most of those who may read this volume were seminaked savages, “ howling through the wilderness.” Could it be that any mother possessing the virtues and the intelligence, the tenderness and the filial

affection, of this unknown one—perhaps a chieftain's wife, or a king's daughter—could have belonged to a race akin to the same savages who roamed over the United States, scalped their enemies, and danced war dances with the scalps hanging from their belts? Must not such a people have been gentle, hospitable, peaceable, and far removed from such extreme of barbarism?

The strange contradictions between the really splendid traits of the peculiar nation, or race, of Indians—so-called—who inhabited the great plateau in the centre of Mexico, long before the time when Cortés subdued it and set up a kingdom of “New Spain” in America, and the despicable and bloody religious rites which they daily celebrated before their idols, are, indeed, an anomaly in the history of mankind. It is to look a little into the life and beliefs, the greatness and the weakness, the rise and the downfall of this peculiar people that we shall now have to do, and the story is intensely interesting.

Who were the Aztecs?—This is a question easily asked, but which the wisdom of the historian may never answer. How may it be answered, indeed, when no one can tell whence came the other Indian tribes of America, or the Eskimos, or the Patagonians, or the singularly rich and powerful Peruvians? Who knows the origin of the savages on the little island of San Salvador in the West Indies, who capered about in picturesque costumes when Columbus first saw land in 1492? Yet some form an hypothesis, and are disappointed if it be not accepted by the gen-

eral public. The best we can do, however, is to point to certain known, and to certain probable facts and traditions, and then to draw reasonable conclusions.

Before we do this, however, let us get clearly in mind the more prominent theories which have been held by different writers concerning the original home of this queer, strange people; or, rather, of all the red, copper, olive, or brown nations, races, or tribes, which inhabited North and South America before white men came over to this country from Europe.

The French archæologist and ethnologist, Brasseur (1814-1874), held that, six or seven thousand years ago, there was the subsidence of a continent between Africa and America, as traditions of it were preserved in ancient Mexican manuscripts, and that this continent almost made a bridge between the East and the West. This is but a repetition of the story of the large, now submerged, island of Atlantis, described by Plato. St. Augustine (354-430) intimated his belief that, "as by God's command at the time of the Creation, the earth brought forth the living creatures after his kind, so a similar process must have taken place after the Deluge in islands" (and, of course, on continents, of which, then, he had no knowledge) "too remote to be reached by animals from the continent" of Asia; and, if there were new creations of animals, suggests Pritchard, an English ethnologist (1786-1848), why not of men? Beechey, the navigator (1796-1859), and Humboldt (1769-1859), after him, the latter being the

most eminent German scientist of his day, thought that the inhabitants of Eastern Tartary and Japan could easily have steered their canoes from island to island across to America, "without ever being on the ocean more than two days at a time."

It is a well-known fact that Japanese wrecks have been found, drifted by ocean currents to America, and it is believed they might sometime have had persons on them who reached this continent.¹ In a narrative of Hoei-Shin, a Buddhist monk of the Fifth Century, he claims that he visited, in the year 499 A. D., a land east of China, which many of his countrymen, and others, have supposed was America. Southey wrote a poem on Prince Madoc, who was a legendary Welshman, and whom traditions say went west from Wales and reached a new world in 1170. It is certain that the Norsemen went from Iceland about the year 900 and reached Greenland, which they subsequently colonized, and that in the year 1000 the same hardy class of voyagers, under Leif Ericson, reached "Vinland," which is believed to have been the coast of Massachusetts.²

These suggestions and facts out of many are stated to show the possibility, if not probability, of the original races of America having come from Asia, or elsewhere, by crossing the seas.

Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist (1797-1875), is sure that the American continent was so reached in very ancient times. If reached, not once but at various times, then it is not improbable that all the early settlers of America were originally from

Asiatic races. It is true, also, that the Peruvians, Mexicans, and other classes of Indians that stretched along from the Aleutian Islands to Peru, were of the same cranial type as the Mongolians, and possessed, as to their pottery, inclination to build mounds and pyramids, and mode of carrying on various arts, a striking likeness to many of the nations of ancient Asia and also to that of Egypt. Some of the ablest modern writers on the subject, like Bancroft of California, (still living), and Squier (1821-'88), have held that the probabilities are that the Mexican peoples came up from the south rather than down from the north. A few other writers, like Agassiz (1807-'73) and Winchell (1824-'91), have held that all American Indian tribes were "probably indigenous" and not migrators from Asia.

But the trend of opinion is that, however the Peruvians came to be in their country, the Aztecs went into Mexico from the north, which is according to their own traditions. For it is certain that: (1) The Aztecs had traditions distinct and clear, picture-writings of which may still be seen, of their traveling from the north. (2) That they surely reached the plateau where is now the City of Mexico from the northern part of Mexico. (3) That they called the place in the far north from which they came, "Aztlán." (4) That they had neither traditions nor records that they had migrated from the south.

Where "Aztlán" was, is, as yet, a puzzle. As it simply means "the place of the Aztecs," it has no etymological significance. It was probably,

however, not Asia, nor any similar distant country, but some place in New Mexico, Arizona, or, preferably, Southern California. It was where there was water, although, of course, it may have been by a lakeside instead of by the seaside. Dr. C. W. Zaremba, a recent enthusiastic student of Mexican history and a collector of Aztec souvenirs, of Riverside, California, in an extensive article published in the *Chicago Tribune* of September 3, 1899, declares his belief that he has discovered the location of "Aztlan," and that it was on Santa Catalina Island, thirty miles west of the coast of California, and almost due south of Los Angeles. The Aztec picture-writings, some of which he possesses, clearly show the peculiar shape of the mountain in "Aztlan," from which that people started on their long journey, and it certainly bears a striking resemblance to the mountain visible from Avalon harbor at Santa Catalina.

We shall probably never know to a certainty where "Aztlan" was, but we may believe it to have been north of Mexico, and west of the Rocky Mountains, and also by the waterside.

There are stone and earth ruins of various shapes, round, pyramidal and square, some of them where the stones are just as accurately squared as in the best Mexican buildings, all the way from the wonderful mound in Sonora in the northwestern part of Mexico, up to the curious clefts and high table-lands of Colorado. There were also mound-builders in Ohio and other states east of the Mississippi. These monuments, whether con-

structed for purposes of religion, as tombs, or what-not, were the products of the hands of unknown former races or nations of men, and it is not illogical to ascribe some of them to the ancestors of those who afterward peopled Mexico.

But we must leave this intensely interesting subject for the archæologist and ethnologist, and state the condition of things when the Aztecs did actually reach Mexico.

First, however, let us note that the Aztecs were not the first Indians to reach the Valley of Mexico. They were preceded by many so-called "nations," or tribes, all of which have been classified by recent historians as belonging to two general groups, the Maya and the Nahua. The Mayas reached Mexico first, and their records indicated they came in the Fifth Century. The chief subdivision of the Mayas is known as the Toltec, and of the Toltecs we are certain of a few things.

About the Toltecs.—There was a large, active, highly civilized people living at Tula, fifty miles north of the present City of Mexico, before the Aztecs settled at that identical spot in or about the year 1150. They took the name from Tula—or Tollan, as it was formerly called—or Tula from them; it is uncertain which. They spread out over much territory, and, possibly, not probably, built the pyramids and other enormous structures which exist to-day in a ruined state in various parts of central and southern Mexico. Few large, strictly-Aztec monuments now exist, for the Aztecs were not, when in Mexico at least, builders of great works that have remained to this

day; but Toltec ruins, or those of a more ancient race, are still scattered about in many places.

The Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at San Juan Teotihuacan, twenty-five miles east of the City of Mexico, and the Pyramid of Cholula, near Puebla, are the most accessible important ruins near the capital, and it is certain they were there long before the Aztec domination. The Pyramid of Cholula the writer has stood upon, and it is to-day a lofty and most conspicuous ruin in the landscape. It is one hundred and seventy-seven feet high and measures nearly a thousand feet square at the base. The Pyramids of the Sun and Moon are not quite so large by circular measurement, but are immense; that of the Sun being two hundred and sixteen feet high and over seven hundred feet square at the base, and that of the Moon being over one hundred and fifty feet high and averaging four hundred and seventy feet square at the base. They are built of brick, stone and rubble. These pyramids were intended for temples to the sun, or to gods, such temples of stone and wood having been placed upon the summits.

The Toltecs disappeared before the advance of the Aztecs, how or why we do not know, unless driven away by hostile tribes. They were one of a confederacy of nations that went to pieces before the dawn of the Aztec nation. The Toltecs claimed, or others have claimed for them, that they also came from the north, and founded Tula about 648 A. D.; if so, this was over five hundred years before the Aztecs reached Tula. They

are believed to have deserted Tula because disintegrated by a rebellion, and to have gone south to Cholula and vicinity; and again still further south a hundred years before the Aztecs arrived at Tula. The date of the migration from Tula is said to have been 1103, or, according to better calculations, 1051. Before this disappearance from Tula, and beginning with about the year 839, their records contain accounts of nine "kings" whose names are fairly well authenticated.

It may be said, further, of the Toltecs, that even if they erected some of the high mounds and pyramids of Central Mexico, they left few written records, and few monumental inscriptions, and what have been found have not yet been deciphered. If they, and not a preceding people, also left the inscriptions on the much grander monuments of stone now to be found in southeastern Mexico, Yucatan and Guatemala, which are full of hieroglyphics and pictures, they might as well not have been made, for there is no one who has the key to their interpretation.

The mystery about the Toltecs, as to their origin, history and progress, and disappearance, is far greater than about the Aztecs. In consequence of the lack of decipherable records relating to them, everything that happened in Mexico prior to the Aztec age has, in many modern volumes, been referred to the Toltecs, without justification in any present known facts. We are only sure that they existed, were probably of the same (Nahua) nation, were powerful, were also builders, and had in them at least some of the same

real elements of high culture possessed by their Aztec successors. It is believed that they were far less cruel than the Aztecs; possibly also, in a general way, were a better class with which to have founded a great American monarchy, had only the fates been kinder to them.

Other Native Races.—Tribes known as the Chicimecs are said to have come into the Valley of Mexico after the Toltecs, and certain of them by that name were there when the Aztecs arrived. But there were also other tribes, or subdivisions of that tribe, there, although that particular name is one much heard of in the early records.

Almost at the same time, as it is thought, the Alcolhuans, whom we shall refer to hereafter as Tezcucans, arrived, and set up their abode at Tezcucuo, twenty miles northeast of the present city of Mexico.

So much at present for the migrations of tribes from, probably, the north, to the region of the Valley of Mexico. The languages spoken by these various peoples were diverse, yet not wholly distinct. The Nahuas, of whom the Aztecs became the most powerful and controlling, spoke what is called the Nahua (or Nahuatl) tongue; the nations to the far southeast, the Maya. We shall refer to the Nahua language later.

The Aztec Chronology.—However early the Aztecs began their southward march from "Aztlan," (which some who have computed their records state was in the year 1090 A. D., but oth-

ers make it later), they arrived in Mexico and were at a place called Chicomoztec, about 1116; and a little later at Tula, which had been abandoned by the Toltecs. From Tula they migrated to the Valley of Mexico, and settled at, or near, the hill of Chapultepec, about 1194. During the next century, they had various engagements with neighboring tribes, and in 1297 were seriously overthrown. At this time they were at Culhuacan (not Coyoacan), which was by Lake Xochimilco. As a consequence, they were obliged to flee to an island called Tizaapan, perhaps in the same lake. In 1325 they decided to make their future home on marshy islands near the western shore of Lake Tezcuco. Why they went there we are not informed.

That year, then, 1325, is to be taken as a real date in Aztec history; from that year begins the foundation of their metropolis and their start as a small, but vigorous and growing people.

The Aztecs called the Mexican country wherein they made their home "Anáhuac," which means "near the water," and that became for them afterward the name of their empire.

What Anahuac Included.—Anáhuac included not only the present Valley of Mexico, but all the country of Mexico over which, in later years, the Aztecs gained control, extending from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from north to south (so Humboldt says) between the fourteenth and twenty-first degrees of north latitude; that is to say, from near southern Honduras in the south to about a hundred and twenty-five miles north

of the present City of Mexico. From being a small number of people and occupying a few square miles by a lakeside in 1325, two hundred years later, in 1521, they held in subjection various alien tribes, embracing more than three hundred municipalities, extending over at least forty thousand square miles of territory, possessing in their, then, zenith of glory an empire of several millions of souls. In that short period of time they had become the most powerful, and, except the Tezcucans, the most civilized nation in North America.

Aztec History in Brief.—The history of the Aztecs in Anáhuac, from the founding of the City of Tenochtitlan to their conquest by Cortés, has been told many times. While enveloped in more or less of tradition, the story of their earlier years there is believed to be substantially as follows:

Tenochtitlan is said to mean “a cactus on a stone,” and the name is significant of how the settlers came to build upon the islands of Lake Tezcuco. There grew on one of the islands a nopal, a species of cactus, out of a rocky base; they saw a golden eagle perched upon it, and, viewing this sight, believing it to be a good omen, they decided to stop there and build. This may or may not be pure legend, but the Aztecs of a later day believed it, although there would seem to be more foundation for the alleged fact that Tenuch (said to have died in 1363) was the chieftain at the time the city was founded, and that its name was derived from him as the founder. The build-

ers chose with much foresight, if they themselves selected the spot instead of relying upon such a superstitious event. Like Venice, Tenochtitlan could be water-protected against enemies, so as to be almost unassailable, and, with the fortifications subsequently constructed, it became a city which was never captured until the final entry of Cortés.

The original immigrants and settlers were few in number, but were the "survival of the fittest" in general vigor. Whatever they were as to civilization, they were certainly not ruder than the first Angle and Saxon colonists of England, or than the Norsemen of the Eighth Century. It is thought the whole number, when they entered Mexico, might not have exceeded a few hundred. They built reed houses of a primitive nature, but, in a few years, as the village grew, these gave place to structures of sun-dried brick and, eventually, of stone, where the owners were able to afford it.

When the period came for stone buildings, they found that the marshy islands were a poor foundation; so they used piles. In fact, to this day the City of Mexico rests largely upon piles, which accounts for so many buildings being out of plumb.

Factional troubles led to some families going to the hilltop of Chapultepec, three miles distant, and others to Tlatelolco, also near by. The short distance between these schismatics and the parent tribe proves they were in the whole composed of but a handful at most; otherwise they would have needed to have gone further to allow for

sustenance and growth. They were not, therefore, like the Israelites on their entry into Canaan, two millions or more strong, but simply a few, brave adventurers and travelers; a mere company of a regiment or a division of the larger army of "Indian" peoples that had for centuries been populating Mexico from the north; perhaps, also, from the south.

The settlers on this Venetian-like site also became expert boatmen, and canoes, made out of single trunks of large trees, capable of holding from two to sixty men, were much employed for all purposes of local transportation. They connected together the islands, and also the mainland, with long embankments of earth and rubble work, using drawbridges with which they might at any time sever the connection. These embankments were always dangerous ways for any bodies of foreign troops to march over, since they could be attacked from the water on both sides. They also built canals through the most of their streets, and, in time, these connected nearly all quarters of the city by direct water communication.

By the year 1350 the village had become a city in size, and the people were numerous enough to demand more than the ordinary tribal organization they had hitherto possessed. That they had war chieftains and leaders before this period there is no doubt, and the names of these have come down to us as those of "kings." But we pass the names by, because of their doubtfulness, and because the facts become much more clear after the popular election held in 1350, in which everybody,

including the women, voted, and at least the first "king" to rule over the Aztecs as residents of Tenochtitlan was chosen. He, and the preceding chieftains before him, must have belonged to what was considered the "blood-royal," for all subsequent kings were selected from the same line.

The result of this election was the establishment of a military democracy. The chieftain elected came to be recognized as, practically, a monarch; but it was a military democracy, because, as to all leading officials, there were popular elections; and because, as war was about to be the chief end of that generation and of succeeding ones, at least until the city became a nation and could spell its name with a large N, the king selected was always one who had proved his ability as a warrior. The historical kings from this time until the days of the last Montazuma, were in this order:

I. Acamapichtli II. (meaning "Handful-of-reeds"), a son of Acamapichtli I., who was probably their ruler while the Aztecs were at Culhuacan. He was selected as the first king of Tenochtitlan and held office for fifty-three years. He built some canals, and under his administration stone buildings began to appear. But during his reign the Aztecs were obliged to pay tribute to the Tepanecs, a tribe on the west border of the lake. For the first time gold-workers came into the settlement from some outside locality and began to ply their art.

II. Huitzilihuitl II. ("Humming-bird"), son of the preceding, was elected king in 1403. Under him a primitive but actual code of laws came

into existence. He is said to have promoted industry, inaugurated rules of trade, and encouraged the making of floating gardens. He is supposed to have been the first chieftain who was buried on "The Hill of the Grasshopper," as Chapultepec signifies; and thereafter the so-called kings were buried on that mount, which became known as "the royal burying-place of the Aztecs." He died in 1417.

III. Chimalpopoca, brother to the last king, succeeded and reigned until 1428. What is called the "Codex Chimalpopoca," which has never been published, and which starts the history of the world from about 1000 B. C., is an Aztec manuscript of probably his reign, and may be the most ancient of preserved written Aztec documents containing the national legends. He is believed to have been murdered.

IV. Itzcoatl ("Obsidian-snake"). He was a brother to the preceding. Under him the chief hindrance to Aztec growth in the valley, the tribe of Tepanecs, whose home was only a few miles from Tenochtitlan, was overthrown and it was made tributary. At the same time the Alcolhuans—the Tezcucans—entered into an alliance with the Aztecs, defensive and offensive, in which the Tepanecs joined, and so the first Aztec military confederation of three tribes was established. The combination was powerful enough to seek conquests of outside territory and tribes. One by one other tribes were overcome, or treated with, and the Confederacy rapidly grew. Itzcoatl died in 1440, after a short but glorious leadership.

V. Moteczuma, or perhaps more correctly, in the Aztec tongue, Motecahzoma; usually, however, known as Montezuma I. ("Wrathful chief"), nephew of Itzcoatl, succeeded, and for twenty-nine years was king. He was not the Montezuma of Cortés day, but a great-grandfather as we understand the pedigree of this "royal" family. He was quite a temple-builder, obtaining for that purpose skilled architects from Tezcuco and elsewhere, and he set the fashion of erecting temples to the honor of the gods of foreign provinces conquered.

VI. Axayacatl the Terrible ("Face-in-the-Water"), grandson of the preceding, followed in 1469, and at this period the bloody custom, which had already grown up, of sacrificing human beings on the temple altars, assumed enormous proportions. The victims were usually those taken captive in war, some of whom were retained as slaves, and others used for sacrifice. Axayacatl, before his coronation, descended upon the Pacific coast, secured many thousands of captives, striking terror in all directions, and brought them back in his train with unusually rich spoils. He died in 1481.

VII. Tizoc ("Wounded leg"), brother to Axayacatl, had a brief administration; he was poisoned in 1486 by a woman, who brought him the fatal cup. He either began, or continued to its practical completion, the construction of the Great Teocalli in Tenochtitlan, which was dedicated by his successor.

VIII. Ahuitzotl ("Water-rat"), brother to

Tizoc, succeeded, and of him the history grows more full of detail. At the very beginning of his career, which extended over sixteen years, the ceremonies attending the completion of the Great Teocalli—the large temple of the Aztec war-god in the centre of Tenochtitlan—called forth, as is computed, more than a million of people from all parts of the country, even from hostile provinces. What this temple was will be described hereafter. The ceremonies attending the induction of its high priest into office, and the other dedicatory formalities, were as splendid as they were barbaric. It was in the very year of his elevation to power that this occurred, 1486 (or 1487), six years before Columbus discovered America. At this time the united Confederacy must have outgrown all former proportions and strength, because there were led up into that temple, on the day of its dedication, thousands upon thousands of victims to be sacrificed. Various accounts, by both native historians and Spanish writers, give the number all the way from twenty thousand to eighty thousand. The king, officiating as high priest, began the ferocious work with his own hand, and was followed by the priests, each of whom slaughtered until physically unable to carry on the performance. Two long lines of victims stretched far out to and over the causeways of the city. No such extensive slaughter had been known before, or was known afterward, in Anáhuac. This king led his armies frequently to battle, and in at least one engagement (in 1494) was badly defeated and his son slain. Some of his

wars were waged far south of Anáhuac. This ruler also performed a public service intended to bring him honor, but which nearly cost him his life. He found Lake Tezcucó becoming low at times; gradually drying up around its borders. He feared—what has since happened, though long after his day—that it would make the island part of the mainland, and so endanger the city's isolation. With the best intent he constructed an aqueduct from large springs at Chapultepec, so as to refill the lake. In one rainy season, it is said, this conduit burst in the city, and almost drowned out his people. It is quite certain, however, that the lake itself, which is lower than the surrounding lakes that drain into it, rose up and caused the destruction. The water went into the king's bedchamber and he had to escape in haste. He died in 1503.

IX. Montezuma II.—the “Coward,” as his fellow countrymen afterward termed him—of the Spanish Conquest days, with whose reign of seventeen years our readers must be more familiar than with that of any of his predecessors, was a son of Axayacatl, and great-grandson of Montezuma I. We shall describe him as soon as we bring up the events that brought Montezuma and the great conqueror, Cortés, face to face.

How Cortés met Montezuma.—The whole career in Mexico of Hernando Cortés reads like the romance of a novelist. With so few men, a mere handful of Spanish adventurers, he held, not one, but various powerful tribes and warlike peoples, numbering hundreds of thousands, at bay, month

by month, while advancing in easy stages from the seacoast at Vera Cruz to the capital, over two hundred miles in the interior.

Cortés was born in Spain in 1485. When nineteen years old he went to Santo Domingo, and, later, when twenty-six years of age, he joined the expedition of Velasquez to take possession of Cuba. Velasquez, as governor of that island, appointed him a judge, (a local *alcalde*), and in this office he exhibited unusual ability. He was handsome and fond of military life, and so Velasquez appointed him to go to Mexico to take possession, in the name of Spain, of all the land he might find, that country having been discovered, two years before, by Cordova.³ There were hitches about his starting, and Cortés, wearying off the delay, and selecting about eight hundred men and ten cannon,⁴ unexpectedly set sail in eleven vessels. He landed at Vera Cruz April 21, 1519, and, in less than seven months' time, on November 8, he had fought a score of battles, won them all, and entered the City of Tenochtitlan as the guest of Montezuma. On August 13, 1521—less than two years thereafter—there was a total end of the Aztec empire.

Previous to his final entry into the country at Vera Cruz, Cortés effected a temporary landing on the banks of the river now called Rio de Tabasco, over two hundred miles east-southeast from Vera Cruz. Here he had a conflict with a warlike tribe of many thousand warriors and won his first signal victory. In his terms of peace at the close of the engagement, a number of Indians

women were presented to him as slaves, one of whom was called Malintzin, who afterward went among the Aztecs by the name of "Malinche," and among the Spaniards by the familiar name of "Doña Marina," (Lady Marina). It is said she was exceedingly beautiful, as well as sagacious, and she soon became so accomplished in the arts of interpretation and statecraft that her services proved invaluable throughout all the future history of Cortés in Mexico. Being acquainted with the Nahua language, spoken by the Aztecs, and also the related jargons of the coast-Indians, she was enabled to interpret what was said later by the messengers of Montezuma to Aguilar, who in turn interpreted to Cortés. Aguilar was also discovered on the coast about this time and, with Marina, shares the credit of assisting Cortés in his difficult intercourse with the natives. He was a Spaniard, who, some years before, had been shipwrecked on the coast of Yucatan and thus understood the language of the coast-Indians. He came into the camp of Cortés, being glad to return again from savage to more civilized life.

Cortés carried through his campaign two red banners, on at least one of which were the words, in Latin, "Friends, let us follow the Cross, and under this sign, having faith, we shall conquer." One of these banners, small and containing a beautiful face of the Madonna, may now be seen in the National Museum in the City of Mexico, while the other, which was perhaps the more highly valued by the Spaniards themselves, having in after years been presented to the chiefs of

the Tlascalan nation, has ever since remained in possession of the municipal authorities of the town of Tlascala, which still exists and bears that name. It is of silk brocade, faded to a light maroon, some eight feet long by six broad, cut in "swallow-tail" fashion. The spear and part of the broken staff are still preserved.

At Vera Cruz Cortés learned definitely of the position and elegance of the capital of the Aztecs, and he soon set out to reach it. Being now visited by nobles who had been sent out by Montezuma, he expressed to them his intention of visiting the capital to see for himself how powerful and rich their king was. Montezuma had heard of the "white men" as soon as they had landed, from his couriers, who were constantly bringing him information as to new events in the empire. He had heard of their victory at Rio de Tabasco, and was anxious to learn more of the victors. Cortés had not proceeded far, when he learned of the Tlascalans as the most formidable enemies of the Aztecs. They lived in the mountains about one hundred and twenty miles west of Vera Cruz, and boasted of three hundred thousand people. The modern town of the same name is located in the valley near the mountains, and contains to-day only four thousand people. It was about half way on the direct road to Tenochtitlan, and it is presumed their city and surrounding villages embraced scarcely more than fifty square miles of territory. They were a brave and proud tribe, who had always refused to pay tribute to Montezuma or

his predecessors. The foresight of Cortés, which was equal to every emergency, served him now, for he immediately decided to attach this alien nation to his cause. The Tlascalans, however, were unwilling to treat with him, and undertook to defeat his progress. Cortés and his men, by great bravery and by the use of cannon and cavalry, fought on successive days several tremendous battles, which eventuated in complete victory; and so complete was the victory that a treaty of peace was made, in which the Tlascalans agreed to quarter the army of Cortés until it was ready to move on, and also to furnish troops to aid him in any conflict with the Aztecs. Thereafter this nation was always his friend, and only by their aid was the final conquest not a complete disaster. Cortés desired them to change their religion, but this he could not accomplish, although they agreed not to have further human sacrifices.

South of Tlascala was Cholula, now a small and miserable place of four thousand inhabitants, then the abode of perhaps fifty thousand souls. Cortés said it had twenty thousand houses. It was the most sacred place in Mexico, for reasons to be stated presently. The people of Cholula invited Cortés to their city and certain events decided him to accept the invitation.

One was the disaffection among his soldiers, which came near terminating his campaign. They had already grown weary of battles and privations, and demanded that they should be returned to Cuba. To overcome this unwillingness to proceed, Cortés performed a most daring act, which

necessitated the future coöperation of his troops; he went back to Vera Cruz and directed a commission to report that, after examination of the vessels, which had been left there in the harbor, they found the same to be unseaworthy, and, on the reception of this report, he ordered them to be dismantled and sunk. When this was done, there was nothing left for the troops but to go forward.

Another event which also happened about this time was the reception of a second embassy from Montezuma, who had now become thoroughly alarmed at the progress and achievements of these "white men." The embassy consisted of five nobles and two hundred slaves, who brought three thousand ounces of gold, several hundred richly decorated mantles and much beautiful featherwork. They begged Cortés to accept the presents, but to come no further, as it was "unsafe," declaring that Montezuma could not control his affiliated tribes sufficiently to insure the safety of Cortés in reaching Tenochtitlan. Cortés said to the embassy that he was commissioned by his august majesty, the King of Spain, to convey the respects of his king to Montezuma and that he must do it in person.

So Cortés, on the whole, determined it best to turn aside to Cholula, and he probably desired to see what was then such a remarkable city. Cholula, according to the accounts, had some four hundred temples, but the chief one was upon an immense pyramidal mound, and was sacred to Quetzalcoatl. He will be described more minutely

when we come to name the chief gods known to the Aztec religion. It is enough to say now that he was supposed to have been a white leader of men, who, after living in Cholula, went away suddenly, prophecyng that he would return, and all the nations of Anáhuac honored him as a divinity of peculiar sanctity.

After visiting the city and temple, Cortés became aware of a contemplated act of treachery on the part of the Cholulans, who, perhaps, had been induced to it by the emissaries of Montezuma, and he made an indiscriminate slaughter of three thousand of them, without giving them opportunity to defend themselves. The event occurred in the great square of Cholula, to which Cortés had invited the chiefs, and where Cortés and his Tlascalcan allies had come in such numbers that, at a word, the Cholulans could be shot down in cold blood, being unprepared for defence. This conduct upon the part of Cortés may have been merited, but few believe it, and it was long—by many it is yet—held to be a great and lasting stain upon the Conqueror's name.

The march forward being resumed, and the once great volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, (the first meaning "the hill that smokes" and the second "the white woman"), being passed, they came to many settlements, including some large cities, but had to fight no battles. There was terror over the country created by two distinct but vividly impressed opinions: the first, that these "white strangers" had monsters with them (horses), that carried

men on their backs, and also big iron affairs on wheels (cannon), that of their own accord belched forth fire and destruction, and it was useless to oppose their progress; the second, that, according to his own predictions, Quetzalcoatl, whom they expected might return at any time, would, on such return, preside over the destinies of the monarchy, and this might be he!

When they reached a point from which they could see the Aztec capital in the distance, they beheld a sight that surprised them by its extensiveness and beauty. However captivating this spectacle is now, then, when the City of Tenochtitlan with its imposing Teocalli, the three large shimmering lakes of the valley, and the surrounding hilltops crowned with edifices, came before the vision of the traveler, it must have been far more magnificent. This whole valley of two hundred miles in circumference was then in the highest state of cultivation, abounding in villages and cities. Lake Tezcuco was a broad expanse, extending entirely around the City of Tenochtitlan, and, besides the vast and green plateau on every hand, there was not a rounded eminence which was not made charming with towered temples and abundant foliage.

Various pauses were made in the valley-cities and towns by the way, but on November 8, 1519, Cortés entered the great capital of the Aztecs, and met Montezuma face to face.

Description of Montezuma.—We are quite sure of our description of Montezuma, as he appeared on that memorable day and afterward, for

various chroniclers, who were with the Spaniards, have narrated it. He was at this time about forty years of age (having been born in 1479);⁵ was tall and thin; had black hair, quite coarse, like his countrymen, but not long. His beard was full but thin, and his expression was serious, his behavior "dignified and sedate." There are pictures of him extant, but they are not believed to have been painted until some years after his death.

When Montezuma was elected king, he was one of the priests of the Great Teocalli—some think the supreme high priest—and had also achieved an excellent record as a soldier in battle. He was of the blood-royal, and one of the most popular of the priests. After he began to reign in 1503, this popularity continued, until about ten years later, when he became unpopular because of the grievous taxes he imposed on his people and the affiliated nations, and because of his assumption of the powers of legislator as well as sovereign. Until this time in his reign the laws were made by the king and his council, but now he took the matter of legislation into his own hands. It is said that his name meant "sad," or "severe" man, but there is no evidence of his wearing more than a serious countenance before Cortés made him a prisoner. When notified of his election by the people as their chief, he was found engaged in sweeping the stairs of the temple, and he at once professed unfitness for the office. It is not too much to say that he felt his unworthiness at that moment, but that he was unfit when the real testing-time of a brave warrior and monarch came the

events of 1519 proved. He could have saved his empire from foreign domination had he continued his popularity until the fatal year arrived, or had he early in 1519 struck the decisive blow. But he hesitated to compel Cortés to retreat to the coast, and until the day of his death was a waverer. In this connection it must be remembered, however, that his superstition about the reappearance of Quetzalcoatl, and his fears that Cortés was that god come back to Anáhuac, may have had much to do with his indecision.

The formal address made to him on his induction into office was preserved by his scribes, and furnishes a fair specimen of the best Indian oratory of that day. Montezuma is said to have been moved to tears by this address. Following the address, he was crowned, the crown being in shape like a mitre, the forepart standing erect above the forehead and the back part hanging down behind the neck. It was probably made of thin plates of gold.

Probably before this coronation day, but after his first anointing, Montezuma entered upon his first war, as king, with a rebel province not far away for the purpose of bringing back captives to be sacrificed, as one of the incidents of his coronation, on the sacrificial altar. In this war he was successful and took to his city many victims. He frequently afterwards led his troops to battle and usually won every conflict. His predecessors had carried their warfare as far south as Guatemala and Honduras, and Montezuma, at least once, went to Nicaragua and gained victories. Under

him the Aztecs became the foremost and most powerful nation in all Mexico. His chief opponents thereafter were the Tlascalans, whom Montezuma undertook several times to chastise, but in one of his engagements with them he was thoroughly defeated and his own son slain. The Tlascalans, however, could not, or did not, push their victory on that occasion to any further conclusion, though always refusing afterward to pay tribute to the Aztecs, as did the other nations.

The laws of Montezuma were severe and enforced with strictness. He would sometimes patrol the streets of the capital at night, in disguise, to see if these laws were violated. He communicated constantly with all parts of his country, by means of swift-running couriers, there being relays of them on the great roads every six miles. He erected many new, and embellished the old, temples, and in 1512 he dedicated a new and large sacrificial stone with 12,000 captives obtained from a revolting province. In his day, Tenochtitlan became, perhaps, the greatest city in the number of its temples and priests in all the world. Many of the temples were small, but the idea was that there should be no excuse for the people in each separate square of houses in the city from having temple services performed for them, almost at their doors, as often as was required. Having been a priest, and believing the daily worship of the gods an essential to morality and the true basis for happiness in the world to come, he was their patron to an unprecedented extent.

To construct and maintain so many separate

structures and their administration required daily and nightly watchers almost innumerable. To care for all these priests and other helpers in Tenochtitlan, and elsewhere in his dominions, he was obliged to impose heavy tributes on the subservient tribes, and equally heavy taxes on his nation. About the same time he grew more and more despotic as to the character of his government, so that what had been a laudable kind of constitutional monarchy became pure despotism.

No doubt the Aztecs as a people would have liked to have broadened and improved their own semi-free monarchical system, but Montezuma intervened and, besides becoming cruel and tyrannical, grew to be selfish and luxurious. In the end his conduct aided to alienate the friendly tribes and weakened his nation in its vital points.

As to his luxuriousness, all accounts agree that Montezuma took his meals alone in the large Hall of Audiences in his palace under conditions of prodigality. The cups from which he drank were of gold or pearl. He never used the same table utensils the second time. Several hundred young nobles were employed in bringing in various plates of food to be tasted as they were set down, at a time when Cortés was present, and it was said this was not uncommon. Each plate rested on a hot chafing dish. He changed his dress four times each day, and also took a daily bath. His clothing he never wore twice, but gave it away to his chief attendants. Swift couriers brought him fish that the day before had been swimming in the Gulf of Mexico. He had a

harem of a thousand wives—some say of three thousand—and in that respect was a “greater than Solomon.” He had fifty sons and daughters; his father was reputed to have had one hundred and fifty. He had near his palace two menageries, various fishponds, and an enormous aviary of the rarest birds. He had a hunting park, an extensive garden of flowers, and, in going out to see them, or to and from his summer palace at Chapultepec, which was built on that hill in a grove of old and magnificent cypress trees, he was always carried reclining upon his litter.

In a word, as he grew rich and strong in power, he became effeminate as well as despotic. In consequence of all these increasing vices, his empire was honeycombed with plots to dethrone him, but, up to the time of the arrival of Cortés, he had managed to hold his people together in fair subjection.

We know his favorite beverage was, not *pulque*, but cacao, and many pitchers of it were prepared for his daily consumption. He was a great smoker, chiefly, however, of an intoxicating weed which the Spaniards called tobacco,⁶ and which was perfumed; and, while he smoked, he was fond of having exhibitions before him of jugglers and mountebanks, for which the Aztecs were famous.

The Meeting with Montezuma.—Cortés entered Tenochtitlan by the south causeway; the same, substantially, as the present south entrance into the City of Mexico. Then the waters of Lake Tezcuco sparkled in the sunshine around

all the city's boundary; now they are to be seen only from the top of the tall buildings and far in the distance. Cortés' own warriors numbered less than four hundred; his Tlascalan allies were about six thousand. The route entering into the city passed by many suburban villages; there were some fifty of them in the environments. These, like the buildings of the capital itself, were not longer built of bamboo reeds; the Aztecs of even the smaller towns had passed that primitive stage long before, and had substantial homes. The waters were covered with thousands of canoes, the whole population, seemingly, coming out to meet the "white strangers." Before reaching the causeway itself, several hundred Aztec chiefs appeared to welcome their guests. Montezuma felt it was incumbent on him to seem to be hospitable, as it might prevent bloodshed, and surely these strangers, he thought, who had come only to give presents and tender the respects of their foreign king, would not remain too long, and would then leave the country.

These chiefs were dressed in rich costumes, having about their loins the same gaily colored sashes (the *maxtli*), which are still to be seen among the descendants of the Aztecs. Their mantles were embroidered in feathers, and their necks and arms were adorned with bracelets. Their ears and under-lips, or noses, had pendants of gold, or precious stones. These chiefs helped to form the strange procession which now entered into the city.

But this was not all of the procession, as it

wound its way to the emperor's palace. Montezuma, himself, came to meet Cortés, with his personal retinue, and reached the incomers at a place about three squares south of the chief plaza, where stood both his palace and the Great Teocalli. The spot of the meeting is now pointed out as that where stands the Hospital de Jesus. He wore a square cloak and a rich girdle; his feet were sandaled, the sandals having soles of gold; his whole attire was sprinkled with precious and glittering stones. On his head were plumes of green feathers, his military head-dress. Cortés advanced beyond his army, which now stopped, and, with two or three associates only, met the Aztec king, who had stepped out of his litter to approach Cortés, and came forward leaning on the arms of four of his nobles, while other nobles held over him a canopy of feather-work, beautifully ornamented with silver and gold.

No stranger meeting of two great men was ever chronicled. Cortés had come from a country which had no knowledge that such a land as Anáhuac was in existence. He was, like Stanley in the midst of Africa, meeting the chiefs of a new race of barbarians. But there was this striking difference between the situations of Cortés and Stanley; the latter knew he should meet only savages; Cortés knew he was among an opulent and highly civilized race of beings, among whom wonderful arts and even written records existed, and with whom gold was accounted as common as the feathers of fine birds or the products of the fields. Montezuma was looking for the first time into

the face of a white man, but, more than this, he might have been looking on the face of a god! His emotions must have been inexpressibly sad, but he concealed them well. Cortés was also perturbed, but to outward appearances was calm, as well as self-reliant.

Cortés, by his interpreter Marina, tendered his respects; Montezuma welcomed him to the city. Cortés then placed around the neck of the king a chain of colored crystal, and was about to embrace him, but this Montezuma's aides prevented as shocking to their ideas of the sacredness of their emperor's person. Montezuma now resumed his position in his litter, after he had appointed his brother to convey Cortés and all his troops to the buildings made ready for them opposite to the Teocalli; and soon after, when Cortés and his soldiers were quartered in this guest-house, the king made his first official call to talk over the situation.

At this point let us take leave of these two men until we have had time to make a more detailed survey of the curious City of Tenochtitlan and of the Aztec people as Cortés found them.

General Description of the Aztec City.—That Tenochtitlan was a fair and vast city to look upon from a distance we already know. It was located 7,875 feet above the level of the sea, and, in consequence, had a magnificent winter climate, while the summer climate, though generally rainy, was of nearly the same temperature. Then, as now, the thermometer must have averaged from sixty-five to seventy-five degrees all the year round.

For nine months of the year the skies were clear and the air sparkling. The city had, in 1519, if the Spaniards stated the fact correctly, sixty thousand houses, chiefly stone-built, which would imply at the least three hundred thousand people.⁸ It was built as a square, each side about three miles long. There rose up in its centre, on one side of the chief plaza, the remarkable pyramid-temple, the Great Teocalli, to the height of eighty-six feet, which presented a landmark for observers from all the surrounding valley. Hundreds of smaller temples were in all parts of the city. These temples, however, having neither golden nor copper domes or minarets, presented but a faint likeness to the barbaric splendors of Oriental cities.

Nor did the municipality contain any twenty-story commercial buildings; on the contrary, the houses of all classes, except of the very rich, were uniformly one story and with flat roofs. It has been thought that most of the residences were "communal," being large enough to contain all the blood-relatives of a single family, and that only the wealthy and the nobles had separate residences, but this point is much in dispute. Occasionally a building rose to the height of two stories, the superstructure being of wood, but this was an exception. The houses had parapets on the roofs for purposes of safety, and to be used as fortresses, and sometimes there were slight towers. The adornments of these buildings were also too trifling to be mentioned; they were severely plain, though substantial. One must not, there-

fore, in picturing in imagination this strange old city, compare it with a modern Cairo or Moscow, much less with Chicago or New York. It was equally as curious as the Oriental cities now are to the eyes of travelers, but not resplendent.

The Aztecs had erected their first buildings of the most meagre materials, but long before the time of Cortés had used the best and hardest stones to be quarried from their mountains. One is almost surprised to know that they freely used granite, porphyry, and even jasper, although the ordinary material was a hard, red, but light and porous, stone; yet, singularly enough, as has been stated, these stone buildings were generally white-washed, and thus the city was wholesome, if less architecturally attractive than it might otherwise have appeared.

The city, viewed from within, therefore, was not like any modern metropolis, American or European, but was much superior to any other city known to have existed in North America prior to later centuries. Canals were in almost every street. Communication to and fro, in the city and about the suburban villages, was carried on chiefly by means of canoes, of which there were said to have been two hundred thousand. The quays had basins and locks, and there were custom officials to collect imposts. Many of the residences had gardens attached, full of tropical plants. There were smooth, wide streets, and many plazas. A central market-place was large enough to accommodate over sixty thousand sellers and purchasers at one time; there was prob-

ably a second one, of nearly equal size, in the capital city, as well as a still larger one in the suburbs. Once a week (every fifth day) a regular fair was held, when the habitués of the markets were increased many fold by salespeople from a distance. Cortés said that, at such times, one of the markets was known to contain two hundred thousand people, but this was probably an exaggeration.

Public fountains and ponds, and the royal baths, were supplied with water by an aqueduct from Chapultepec. There were lighthouses upon towers, to direct the canoes at night, and the streets were lighted by braziers. These streets, when not canals, were sprinkled daily to keep down the dust. Certain hours of the day and night were announced by the priests from the summits of the temples by blowing through conch-shells, for time was regulated there, for priests and for laborers, as strictly as in a modern manufactory.

It is stated that Tezcucó, about twenty miles northeast from Tenochtitlan, was a much larger and more cultured city, but that was not strictly Aztec, and, nevertheless, the fame of the latter excelled.

The Palace of Montezuma.—We have briefly referred to some of the habits of the king in his royal abode, but the size and appointments of his town residence need an additional word. It was an exceedingly long and a low building, as is, indeed, the present palace of President Díaz, which is partially on the same spot, but is much less enormous in extent than that of Montezuma. It was built of huge blocks of the porous red stone

heretofore described, well cemented together. It enclosed three large plazas, in each of which played a fountain day and night. There were twenty doors that opened on the various squares and streets, over each of which was the coat of arms of the kings of Anáhuac, an eagle gripping in his talons a jaguar. The palace was full of immense halls, one capable of holding three thousand persons. Besides these, there were a hundred or more smaller rooms, and as many marble baths.

As Montezuma was frequently visited by the two other kings of the confederated nations, of Tezcuco and Tlacopan, there were suites of apartments reserved for their use, as well as for the nobles and lords of the city, and the ministers of state. There were also rooms for the one thousand or more women who were wives of Montezuma, or attendants on his court. A writer who was with Cortés says that, while he often wandered about the palace until he was tired, he never saw the whole of it. The walls and floors were faced with polished marbles, and there were many curious carvings on balconies and porticoes. The woods used were cedar and cypress, and were held together without nails. The roofs were a succession of terraces. On the marble floors were choicest mats, and before the windows (glass was unknown) were curtains of brilliant colors. Through the halls were golden censers, in which were burned spices and perfumes.

Not far away, (where the Hotel Jardin and the San Francisco Church now are), were large gardens for wild beasts, and another near it for

birds—a genuine zoological museum and aviary; also ponds of wonderful fish and alligators. Mexico had many birds of rarest plumage, among them the scarlet cardinal, various brilliantly colored parrots, the golden pheasant, and beautiful humming-birds, and these could always be seen in the king's gardens. There were also groves of rare trees, and everywhere lovely flowers; the latter still grow in their perfection in the Valley of Mexico. It was in these gardens where Montezuma, in his latter days, spent much of his time, alone, or with his favorite wives.

The building in which Cortés and his troops were quartered had been the palace of Axayacatl, the father of Montezuma. It was located just west of the Great Teocalli, on the spot where stands now the National Pawnshop of the City of Mexico. It consisted of a low range of stone buildings, occupying much ground, and affording room for all the regular Spanish troops.

The Great Teocalli.—The chief temple of the Aztecs was the central one near the palace of Montezuma, occupying more ground than the present enormous Cathedral in the city, which is built directly facing the site; it took up much of what is at present the main plaza. It was the largest, as well as the chief, sanctuary of the Aztecs, but not the largest in all Mexico; the one at Cholula, which still exists, being twice as high and proportionately larger at the base.*

* The writer has been upon this pyramid and has described it, briefly, in his *Bright Days in Sunny Lands* (1904), p. 408.

The Great Teocalli was erected to the chief Aztec god called Huitzilopochtli, which is a name composed of two words, "humming-bird" and "left;" and his images contain a representation of this bird, with the feathers only on its left foot. A "humming-bird" was surely a curious name for a war-god, especially as this was the great god of war of the nation, although often spoken of as the god of Nature and of the Sun; in any event he was their patron divinity.

The legend that a humming-bird originally directed the first settlers toward Mexico may have had something to do with the singularity of this name as applied to this protecting Deity. His temples were always the largest and most stately, and the chief sacrifices of human beings were on Huitzilopochtli's altars. This god had another name, "Mexitl," and it is from this name that the word Mexico is derived. The latter name was not uncommon to the Aztecs, and seems to have been in such use, when the Spaniards made their conquest, that it was usually so called by them, and on the first Spanish map of the Valley of Mexico, made by Clavigero in 1580, the city is put down as "Messico."⁹

The great temple was oblong, being three hundred and seventy-five feet long and three hundred feet broad at the base. It was five stories high, each story built of huge blocks of stone superimposed upon the preceding, but each ascending story being of smaller size (six feet narrower only) as it rose toward the sky. To ascend it, the priests in charge walked up to the first terrace,

and then went around this narrow walk of six feet to the other side and ascended to the next, and so to the summit, to reach which they passed up one hundred and fourteen steps. A wall, eight feet high and very thick, surrounded the temple to keep away the people who were not priests, and to protect it and the courtyard around it from intrusion into its sacred precincts. This wall was smoothly plastered and crowned with battlements in the form of huge stone snails. It also had turrets. On or against the wall, on the outside, were hideous carved snakes, from which fact it is usually called the "wall of snakes." Military stores and weapons were kept in small rooms built on the top of the outside wall. The courtyard between the wall and the temple was paved with flat stones, so smooth that the Spaniards complained that their horses could not keep their footing on them.

The reason for the different terraces was in part architectural, but probably also for the priests to display themselves, when parading around it in their gorgeous garments, which could be seen by the people from the housetops, or, when the priests were high enough, from the near streets of the city.

On the topmost terrace stood two tall towers, each of three stories, and fifty-six feet high; the first story of stone, and the upper stories of wood, the last being crowned with cupolas. These towers were used as sanctuaries; the right-hand one being dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, and the left one to (it is supposed) his half-brother, (at least

so-called), Tezcatlipoca. Some have averred that the left-hand one was for various idols, brought there in turn, according to which should preside over festival days, but Bernal Diaz (1498-1593), soldier under Cortés and, later, an historian, says he saw Tezcatlipoca there, seated, in the left-hand sanctuary, and the best authorities hold that it was for him. Each of these horrible looking gods was placed upon a stone base, about four feet high, and in front of them hung huge, rich curtains, with tassels, and bells of gold that rattled as the hangings were moved to and fro. Before these gods were small stones of sacrifice, each about three feet wide, five feet long and three feet high.

Another and larger stone of sacrifice for public occasions was near the entrance to the upper terrace, as approached from the last stairway, in full view from the city, the two towers named being at the other end of the platform. This large stone of sacrifice may be the one now in the National Museum of Mexico, an illustration of which appears as the frontispiece to this volume. This latter stone is eight feet in diameter, oblong, and thirty-one feet around. It was discovered near the Cathedral in 1791. It has elaborate carvings, representing victorious chiefs under the former king Tizoc, who ruled from 1481 to 1486. This king is represented dragging prisoners by the hair to the place of sacrifice. There are fifteen groups of these prisoners, two in a group, and they are believed to represent fifteen conquered tribes. The carving also illustrates the evening star and the

moon engaged in a mortal struggle. On the top, there is an image of the sun in the centre, but this has been partially cut out to make a basin, as some have supposed, for the head or shoulders of the victim, because there is a canal leading to a niche on the edge, as if to catch the blood and carry it away. Some consider this simply a "gladiatorial stone," on the top of which a gladiator, standing, would fight with another gladiator, and the defeated one would be led off to the real sacrificial stone to be immolated.

In the upper stories of the towers Diaz found other idols and bloodstains; although Cortés says these towers were used for the ashes of the deceased cremated kings and nobles. Before each chapel, on a stone hearth, of a man's height, a fire was kept burning perpetually, and it was prophetic of grave misfortune should it become accidentally extinguished. Here, also, stood an immense drum of snake-skins, which was beaten on festival occasions.

Between the central pyramid and the outer walls were some seventy or more other small stone structures, all with many elevated stone pillars on them, on which were kept fires in adoration of the idols. There were six hundred such pillars, and at night their fires served "to turn night into day" to all who served in the temple. Many of these seventy stone buildings—about forty of them—were also little temples, each with its idol; the tallest being that to the god Tlaloc, which was ascended by fifty steps.

To take care of all these smaller temples, as

well as the larger in this one vast central site, more than five thousand persons were employed; priests, nuns, children and other persons, both men and women.

The Awful Sacrifice of Human Life.—The Aztecs did not slay their enemies in battle if they could capture them alive, but preferred—even went to war to secure—prisoners whom they could use either as slaves or as victims on their altars. All the Indians nations of North and South America had the same general idea that their gods could best be propitiated by human victims, although many of the tribes living in the present United States, who used the tomahawk, slew their enemies merely in order to secure their scalps, a species of warfare unknown to the people of Anáhuac. Perhaps we must except the Maya tribes from having much to do with human sacrifices, but this is not quite certain. The Aztecs also sacrificed birds, and occasionally animals, but there can be no exaggeration of the fact of the awful fate of thousands of prisoners of war in the temples, and also of some of their own people, who offered themselves to be immolated, even if the figures are appallingly great and sometimes improbable.

The skulls of those slain, put on cross-poles around the summit of the Great Teocalli, were the saddest of proofs to the Spaniards of such sacrifices. There were poles set upright on the topmost platform, about four feet apart, and cross-poles were run through them. On each cross-pole were hung five skulls. At either end of the plat-

form were also two high pillars made of skulls, each facing outward. When there were distinguished captives, the heads were left in their natural state, with hair and skin on, which was the most ghastly spectacle of all. Bernal Diaz claimed that two Spanish soldiers actually counted 136,000 of these skulls when the Spaniards first ascended the temple, but this is supposed to have been an overstatement.

The manner of the sacrifices on the Great Teocalli, and, doubtless, on the top platforms of other temples in Anáhuac, has often been detailed, and is too sickening to bear any extended repetition. The victim was stripped, and then extended upon the sacrificial stone, being firmly held by four priests. The executioner, who was sometimes the chief priest, especially on great occasions, wore a red vestment, and on his head a crown of green and yellow feathers. He used a sharp stone knife (the *itztli*), making a deep incision between the ribs; then, thrusting in his hand, tore out the living heart and deposited it in the censer before the idol that was being worshiped. The body was at once thrown down to the ground from the top of the temple, where either the warrior who had captured the prisoner, if he were present and recognized his victim, or whoever first picked it up, had the privilege of cooking and eating the thighs, arms and breast. The rest of the body was burned, or given as food for the beasts in the royal menagerie.

We have already stated that, when the Great Teocalli was dedicated, about 1486, Ahuizotl, the

king, sacrificed an enormous number of captives. Torquemada, the historian and priest (1545-1617), who went to reside in Mexico some forty years after Cortés conquered it, and who gathered his account from native traditions and, possibly, records, says they numbered 72,344. Clavigero (1731-'87), the Jesuit writer, born in Mexico, says the number was 60,460; others put it much less, even down to 20,000. But, taking the smallest number as most probable, what a butchery of innocent victims during only four days of the royal rites and festivities! History furnishes no other example of such sanguinary religious ceremonies.

It may well be that in this one thing alone, of their perseverance in destroying human life on their altars, as if it were but the life of the moth or of the savage beast, this nation well merited the retribution which befell it so soon after the Spaniards—who had other national and individual faults not to be palliated, but who were not murderers of the same dreadful mold, nor cannibals—had taken possession of their fair capital.

The Aztec Religion.—It is impossible to comprehend how a race of people, or any portion of that race, who were in some respects so esthetic in their tastes; who were versed, even rudely, in many important sciences; who had written documents; who maintained a high moral code in family life, and who had so many excellent laws to govern them, could be so exceedingly barbarous in their religious observances, unless we know a great deal more about their religious beliefs than we

now do. Unfortunately, while we know much of their gods, we understand less of the Aztec inner religious life than we should like. This is because their own chroniclers, and those of the conquerors who held these "pagans" in such disdain that they never tolerated their religion after the conquest, took no pains to write about it with minuteness. All accounts on the subject are unsatisfactory and mystifying. Still, we can gather from the annals of that period, and the known facts, considerable information upon their mythology, from which such curious religious observances sprang; and it throws much light upon the bloodiness of their rites.

The chief gods were believed to delight in the horrors of the sacrifice, and it is easy to conjecture that, as this mythology was self-originated, the immediate ancestors of the Aztecs of Mexico must, perforce, have been cruel and bloodthirsty men. We hardly believe that this nation was degenerating, although it may have been increasing in barbarity in this one respect, owing to the insatiable cruelty of their kings.

In the early ages of the world bloodthirstiness appears to have been the rule, even after signs of civilization were well under way, and races which, from their general intellectual standing, should have been peace-loving and uncruel, were rarely an exception. It is so to-day in the heart of Africa; it was so in the past centuries in the heart of Asia. Is it any wonder that it was so in the heart of America?

The mythology—which term means a mythical

theology; doctrines of gods who were really but myths—of the Aztecs was in many respects like that of other early nations of the East. This is one of the reasons for supposing their ancestors were originally from Asia. Still, the likenesses between the religions of the peoples of Asia and of the Aztecs were not greater than were their dissimilarities.

Like most untutored peoples, they had always believed in good and evil spirits, and, therefore, their gods were both good and bad, but, unfortunately, their chief gods were what we should call bad. They had minor gods of a different character, as of the seasons, of the harvest-time, of warriors, hunting, fishing, medicine, mountains, thunder, etc., who were scarcely good or bad; but of their five chief gods at least three were certainly far from good in what they rigorously demanded of their worshipers.

The Aztecs did rise up to some conception of a Supreme God, who was chief Lord of the universe, and supreme even above the god who made the earth and the heavens. Their literature proves this. There are beautiful appeals to God (to Teotl, the Supreme God) as the great Lord over all. He was also called Tloque-Nahuaque, meaning "First Cause of all Things." Also Italnemoaloni, "He in Whom and by Whom we are and live." In an Aztec prayer He was spoken of as "God of all purity." But a conception of Him, or of any inferior god, as a loving, all-merciful Father, who might love His earthly children "with surpassing love," more ready to be merciful

and helpful than arbitrarily adhering to fixed laws of "justice," they did not possess, nor have any peoples comprehended it, save as they received it from the Christian religion. On Teotl they did not build up much mythology, much less theology; they did not endow him with the finer moral attributes which enter into our conceptions of the Deity. Nor did they make any images of him, perhaps because they looked upon him simply as a spirit; perhaps because they considered him too exalted to receive human adoration after their usual forms.

It is interesting in this connection to note that the wisest and best of all the kings of the nations in the Valley of Mexico, Nezahualcoyotl, the Tezcucan, living near and exceedingly friendly with the Aztecs, and also believing in the Aztec gods, erected one great temple, wherein he refused to have human sacrifices made, and dedicated it to "The Unknown God, the Cause of Causes." Yet, even with this vague and indefinite idea of *one* Deity being more than any other, they could not take in the view of God as being sole god. If He were the head of the universe, He was yet not the only god.

As to the minor gods, they either deified men after death as gods (and some believed their chief gods were, once, men who really lived, and who, in process of time, were given a place in their mythology), or they made them out-and-out from their fears, superstitions, dreams and hopes, and to these inferior gods, and not to Teotl, they prayed, built their temples and sacrificed.

It would be profitless to name the more than two hundred gods that have place in Aztec mythology. Perhaps thirteen of these only were considered as principal deities. As every principal god had various names, we cannot be certain how many there were. Below we shall name the four which, in addition to the Supreme God (Teotl) already named, appear to have most influenced their religious ceremonies.

First, and chief, after Teotl, was Tezcatlipoca ("shining mirror"). He was supposed to be the god who created the heavens and the earth and also man. His images always represented him holding a mirror in his hands. As time had no effect upon him, he had the face of a young man. Tezcatlipoca rewarded the just, but punished the unjust by disease. He also went about among men inducing them to destroy one another. There were placed stone seats for him at the corners of the streets, where he might rest, and no one was allowed to sit on those seats. Although his face always had a young appearance, the images of him were ugly. Above his head was, usually, a larger head, with immense round eyes and big ears, and the general whole was grotesque and disagreeable. Tezcatlipoca was not generally supposed to be as bloody a deity as the god to be named next, but many sacrifices were made to him, and the annual festival to him was celebrated with a sacrifice of girls.

Second, Huitzilopochtli, or Mexitl.⁹ He was the most honored of all the Aztec divinities. He has been mentioned before. It was chiefly for him

that the Aztecs erected their first small hut-temple when they founded Tenochtitlan. It was for him that so mighty a Teocalli was built in the city afterward. He was not simply a god of war, but a terrible god of war. He was said to have been born of a woman without a human father, and that when born he had a shield in his left hand, a lance in his right hand, a green plume on his head, and feathers on his left leg. His figure on top of the Great Teocalli, in the tower-sanctuary, was of wood, painted blue, the forehead of an azure tint, and the face crossed from ear to ear by a band of azure. A helmet, like a bird, was on his head, and a collar representing six human hearts was around his neck. He had also the sceptre, feathers, etc., to indicate his general appearance at birth. He was always one of the most hideous of the gods, to whom most victims were sacrificed, and in case of war some image of him was carried by the priests through the city to arouse the people to go forth to battle.

Third, Tlaloc, "master of Paradise." He lived on the mountain summit, where people went to pray to him. He was a Toltec god, but the Aztecs believed in him as governor of their future place of abode, (the Sun), for they were lookers-forward to an immortality beyond the grave. Images of him were also horrible. Children were sacrificed to this god, and the year was full of festivals to him when other human sacrifices were offered.

Fourth, Quetzalcoatl, also a Toltec god, whose personal life as a divinity was quite blameless. He

was "god of the air." Some thought he was a real priest at Tula before the Aztecs arrived, but that he left for Cholula and was deified after death. As there were two of that name, a king and a divinity, they have probably become mixed up in the records. It is interesting to observe that the first Spanish missionaries saw in Quetzalcoatl "a disciple of Jesus Christ," because he "taught charity, gentleness and peace." They believed from this that the Gospel must have been previously preached in Anáhuac, not only because they saw this supposed man-god was so good, but also because they fancied they saw resemblances in certain of his customs to those of their own religion. He was always described as once a man; a tall man, with a white skin, broad forehead, large eyes and bushy beard, who invented the art of smelting metals and working in stone. At Cholula he had won the hearts of the people and had resided there twenty years; then went toward the sea, never to return, but sent word back that he would return at some time in the far future at the head of white-faced men and govern the kingdom. The natives of Cholula, whether Toltecs or what, promptly deified him, and ever afterward they, and the Aztecs also, venerated him as the "god of the air." His fame spread into Yucatan, and later kings there declared they were descended from him. All Mexico believed in him and in his promise to return; and this is what made the Aztecs specially fearful that Cortés and his soldiers might be Quetzalcoatl and his band returning to claim possession of the land, which, in his

absence, had been glad to tender him their worship.

Quetzalcoatl was at first only worshiped by offerings of fruits and flowers; his teachings were wholly of the arts and of the precepts of peace. But in the later years of the empire, when the Aztecs had set such constant examples of the sacrifice of human beings to their own peculiar gods, the Cholulans sacrificed also hundreds, if not thousands, of victims to this gentle and peace-loving god.

There were, in addition to gods, goddesses of the earth and of maize, of flowers and of aged women, etc. In truth, there were gods and goddesses to fit every condition in life, and to account for every past or present event in the heavens or the earth. These minor gods were not all bloody creatures, it is true, but as their chief divinities were, is it scarcely a wonder that, so long as they believed in them, human sacrifices to propitiate these gods were continued, or that the nation should be led to believe by the priests and kings that the larger the sacrifices, the greater would be the mercies to come down upon the whole people?

The idols of these gods were made of stone, terra cotta and wood, though often of gold and silver. They were of all sizes, and not in agreement in the same class, even as to grotesque details. These idols were as numerous as are idols now in India or China, being in the houses of the people and along the roads and streets. The first bishop of Mexico, Zumárraga (1486-1548),

says that one order of Spanish monks alone destroyed twenty thousand idols in eight years time.

Temples where occurred Aztec sacrifices, such as have been named, were not alone in Tenochtitlan, but elsewhere. Torquemada, the Spanish historian, who resided in Mexico and wrote a *History of the Indian Monarchies*, declared that there were fifty thousand temples in Anáhuac. Other historians of near his day declared there were a million of priests, which must have been an exaggeration.

The temple service consisted of hymn-chanting and incense-burning at dawn, noon, sunset and midnight. The sun was incensed thrice every morning. Each morning also these priests painted their bodies black with soot, and over this black covering put figures in yellow or red ochre; but, at night, they bathed in temple fountains and were made clean again. For ordinary use on the streets they wore black cotton caps, but during the ceremonies put on colored mantles, according to the orders to which they belonged. Their hair was allowed to grow as long as it would. They never drank to excess, and severe were the laws for disobeying customs, or for immorality. The great door of the temples always faced to the west, so that in bending down before the idol at the east end, the worshiper was turned toward the east—toward the rising sun.

To keep up their worship in its grander forms almost continually, there were festivals to one god or another nearly every day in the year. Many of these were, of course, not accompanied

by the shedding of blood, although animals and birds were frequently sacrificed; quails, especially, were offered in enormous numbers, usually at the sunrising, but also at other hours. They were often light and cheerful festivals, accompanied with dances of men, of women and of children, and with national songs. The Toltecs, who had preceded the Aztecs, had inaugurated such peaceful festivities, that nation being averse to bloodshed.

The chief priestly ceremonies were gorgeous, so as to dazzle the people with the splendors of the worship. Each priest was devoted to the service of some god. He was allowed to marry, practiced penances (fastings, flagellations, etc.), maintained confessionals and had the power of absolution. Men usually confessed but once during their lives, in their old age, because, if they repeated an offence once confessed and pardoned by the priest, it could never afterward be expiated. When the priest absolved the confessor, the certificate of it also shielded him from prosecution by the civil law.

Future life was believed in, and was divided into three states: (1) Of the wicked, who went to hell; a place of everlasting darkness. (2) Of the class who died of diseases and were not wicked, but had not earned heaven by either their heroism or death on the sacrificial altar. (3) Of those who fell in war, or were slain on the stone of sacrifice. Those who did not belong to one of these three classes, who were simply "deceased good men," were supposed to be four years in a

preparatory state before entering upon the enjoyment of heaven, and for these, during each of the four years, offerings of food, wine, flowers and perfume were placed on or near the burial-place of his body, or his ashes, accompanied with songs, feasting and revelry. Paradise was thus clearly reserved, in the first place, for heroes and martyrs; then for good men, but only after further probation. With such beliefs as to how immortality in the Sun could be earned, the enigma of their constant warfare with other tribes, even when peace could easily have been concluded, was no longer such. War was always glorious, and death in war had this allurements ahead.

Marriage and Funeral Rites.—Marriages were usually performed at the age of about twenty-one in men and eighteen in women. When sons and daughters arrived at that age the parents consulted soothsayers as to the desirability of the match proposed for their children, and, if the augury was for a happy union, some old lady relatives of the young man sought out the father of the proposed bride, taking presents and asking for the daughter's hand. He always refused it at first, but subsequently, other deputations being sent, if he acceded, a date was soon fixed. On the date the father and mother of the bride gave her good advice, and then led her, with some accompanying music, to the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom and his relatives met the party at the door with lighted torches. The betrothed offered incense to each other, when the couple were led to the great hall in the house, and the

marriage took place. The two seated themselves on a mat before a fire built for the occasion in the centre of the room; the priest made a long address on the duties of the pair to each other, and then tied the skirt of the girl's mantle to the mantle of the young man, and this constituted the principal marriage service. To complete the tie, however, the bride walked seven times around the fire; after which she and her husband burned incense to the gods and exchanged presents. A banquet and dance followed. The couple had to remain in the house for four days, "in fasting and prayer," when they were permitted to show themselves as man and wife.

When an Aztec died a sort of undertaker, or master-of-ceremonies, was sent for. He cut up a number of pieces of papyrus, and covered the body with them; then poured out water on the head of the deceased. The body was then dressed according to the occupation or condition of the deceased; if a soldier, like the idol of Huitzilopochtli; if a merchant, like the idol of the merchants, etc. A vessel of water was placed by the dead to slake his thirst on his journey to his future abode, and papyrus bits given him as passports on the way.¹⁰ Sometimes his domestic animal, (*techichi*), much like a dog, but now extinct, was killed to accompany him on his journey, and both man and beast were burned, or buried, at the same time, together.

Cremation was common, the general exceptions to it being where the deceased had met a violent death, or had died of an incurable disease, or was

under seventeen years of age, in which cases they were buried. The altar for the burning was usually attached to the temple, where the dead person or his family had attended worship. When the body was being burned, the mourners threw on the flames jewels, weapons and food. In the case of kings, sometimes an embalming was attempted, but probably this was only that the body might last through the extended ceremonies. On the day of his decease, the general ceremonies were not unlike those for a private person, but on a funeral day they were gorgeous in all respects. The body was laid on a litter, or placed on a throne, and borne to the temple amid a procession of priests, nobles and people, as well as the slaves to be immolated. At the funeral of some of the kings, several hundred slaves belonging to the royal household were slain on the sacrificial stone in the usual manner and the bodies cremated. These slaves were supposed to follow the soul of their royal master to the Sun and there attend upon him.

The Aztec Calendar.—The Aztecs had a prepared calendar and various copies of it, in stone or picture-writing, are in existence. Their year was of three hundred and sixty-five days, like our own, but was composed of eighteen months, of twenty days each, and the month was subdivided into four weeks of five days each. To the last month, five days were added to make up the full number. These were called “useless” days and were given up to festivities. The name of each month and each day had a meaning; for example,

the first month, beginning with the day corresponding with our February 2,¹¹ called "Atlahualco," signifies "want of water;" the fifth month, "Toxcatl," "dry or slippery," (as if they were uncertain whether it would rain or be dry); the sixteenth month, "Atenoztli," "fall of the waters," etc. The names of the days were objects, as fish, house, lizard, tiger, flower, etc.

Every fifty-two years made a cycle, and, at the end of the cycle there was a curious celebration, upon the hypothesis that it might be the world would then be destroyed. On the afternoon of the last day of the cycle, the temple and household fires were suffered to go out, and furniture, utensils and garments were destroyed. Then a procession of priests went to the mountains. Men in the city watched the procession from their housetops, while the women remained indoors, with covered heads, under the fear that, if they witnessed the procession, they would, when the final hour arrived, be turned into beasts. At midnight of that day the Pleiades was due at the zenith, and, if it reached there, it was the signal that a new day would come and a new cycle begin. At the supreme moment a new fire was kindled by the friction of sticks on the exposed breast of a noble, who was then put on a funeral pyre, and the fire communicated to it. Torches were lighted from the pyre and were rapidly carried by couriers over the country, to the temples and homes of the people.

We have omitted to state that at the end of the cycle twelve and one-half days were added to it,

a proof that the Aztecs were amazingly correct as to their calendar, this addition making it more exact than the calendar of any civilized nation of Europe until the Gregorian calendar came into existence in 1582, long after the Aztec custom had come into use. As it was, the Aztec calendar would not lose a day in five centuries; by the Gregorian calendar there is a loss of one day only every 3,323 years.

The last twelve or thirteen days of the Aztec cycle were given up to festivities, the evening of the last day being spent as above recited. The last celebration of the Festival of the Cycle was in 1506; when the next cycle occurred, the Aztec nation no longer existed. In their system of ages, the Aztecs supposed a series of cycles, embracing several thousand years, when not only the world and mankind, but the sun itself, was destroyed, and a new series of cycles would begin by a re-kindling of the sun by the Supreme God, and new creations of the world and man by Tezcatlipoca.

Many have supposed that one of the most wonderful objects in existence connected with the Aztec knowledge of the movements of the sun, moon and stars, and of cycles, etc., is the "Calendar Stone," discovered in 1790, under where the Great Teocalli stood, and which is now in the Mexican National Museum. It is nearly three feet in thickness and twelve and one-half feet in diameter, and weighs almost sixty thousand pounds. It is said to have been quarried and carved in 1512, having been brought from Coyoacan, and, when being taken across the causeway

on wooden rollers, broke down upon the draw-bridge, and was recovered, or, as other writers declare, a new one was obtained and successfully brought to the temple by the combined efforts of five thousand men. It is generally understood, however, that this stone, or the original after which it was patterned, was Toltec rather than Aztec, the Toltecs having possessed astronomical knowledge long years before the Aztecs reached Mexico. This stone, or its original, may have been in Tula, and may have been removed from there by the Aztecs, but the theory of such a long journey for it is rather untenable.

As to what is actually represented upon this Calendar Stone, there is no agreement among scholars. The illustrations given of it in the different books, or, indeed, the original itself, which the writer has seen, can certainly not be interpreted by everybody, even if of more than average intelligence. That it is an harmonious design, beginning in the centre with the sun, as it was usually painted by the Aztecs, and with other figures representing days and months, cycles and epochs, and various understood and not understood solar events, there is scarcely room for doubt. The Mexican archæologist, Gama (1735-1820), insisted that it was only a sun-dial—and sun-dials were well-known and commonly used; but the better opinion seems to be that, whether used for that purpose or not, it relates to various periods of time, of the solstices and equinoxes, and of the transit of the sun over the zenith of Mexico. At all events the Aztecs were more versed

than we should naturally suppose in the science of astronomy, and some of their names for the heavenly bodies were extremely expressive, as, for a comet, "Citlalinpopoca," which means "the smoking star."

The Aztecs calculated all the years of their Mexican history from 1091 A. D., when they first instituted or "reformed" their calendar. From that date they began to note in their annals the eclipses, and evidently knew what caused them; and they had from that period ideas about astronomical science, the correctness of which, whether original or derived from the Toltecs, has astounded all writers who have tried to unravel Aztec attainments.

Laws and Courts.—All barbarous nations have some established laws, or rules, usually such as custom and their kings have decreed. But in Anáhuac the legal system was complete, and based on a large amount of practical wisdom. There was one "supreme judge," from whom no decision in criminal matters could be appealed. He was the supreme court on public and private offences. Below him sat a court of three judges, who held daily sessions, if required, and heard both civil and criminal causes. From them no civil cause could be appealed; criminal ones could go, as above stated, to the "supreme judge" for final hearing. In each quarter of the city there were small court judges, equivalent, in many respects, to our justices of the peace, called "lieutenants of tribunals," who first judged the causes arising in their several districts. Below them were

"commissioners," who preserved order, if they could, without legal measures; if they could not, they would direct policemen to make arrests and carry offenders to a "lieutenant of tribunals." The "supreme judge" appointed the three judges of the court below him, but each "lieutenant of tribunals" and "commissioner" was elected by his fellow-citizens. In very grave matters the "supreme judge" made no decree till he had advised with the king. This whole system seems to have been as well devised as if it were a plan of the Twentieth instead of the Fourteenth, or possibly of the Fifteenth, Century.

There were no lawyers, but the accuser could make no charge unsupported by witnesses, and the accused could defend himself under oath upon his gods. If land property was in dispute, resort was had to the official records, which were carefully preserved.

At first, Aztec laws were made by the priests; afterward by the nobility. Itzcoatl was the first sovereign to make some laws for himself, and succeeding sovereigns did likewise, but the old laws were also allowed to stand and were rarely appealed. Despotism naturally followed the sovereign's interposition in becoming both legislator and executive, and Anáhuac was in this condition of despotism when Montezuma ended his days, and the empire was brought to an inglorious end.

Food and Medicine.—In their earlier years in Mexico, the Aztecs were compelled to live on the poorest imaginable food. Surrounded by hostile

peoples, growing rapidly in numbers, residing on small islands in a lake, they could plant and gather little maize or other grain—what they did plant other tribes might harvest—and cultivate but few fruits. They were, therefore, often obliged to eat flies, ants, grasshoppers, snakes and roots of plants. There was a very prolific species of fly, called the “vegetable fly,” which they caught, and a dough made of them, seasoned with saltpetre, and cooked, made food even down to Spanish times; the Spaniards said it was not unpalatable. Whether from this kind of food or not, in the early days of the nation pestilence was not uncommon. Diseases broke out now and then that swept away thousands. But afterwards the race grew stronger, plagues were less prevalent, and centenarians were frequently spoken of as not anomalies. The Nahuas, as a rule, were a vigorous, healthy, long-lived people, and so, to-day, are many of their descendants.

Maize was the most stable product of the field, and grown wherever the soil would grow it. This is our Indian corn, and it still flourishes in various parts of Mexico. The people made cakes of it, called by the Mexicans of to-day *tortillas*, and similar cakes are still sold in all Mexican cities. Sometimes the maize was eaten in the form of a porridge. After maize, cacao (or cocoa), was in brief demand, of course mainly as a drink. The cacao-bean, as it is called, being a seed from the cocoa tree, was ground up with certain other seeds and boiled; the liquid was shaken up till frothy, then mixed with a little

dough made of maize, after which it was cooked again. It is said the same method of preparing chocolate was adopted in Spain from Mexico, and afterward in France, and that the best chocolate is now prepared in the same way, though where the Aztecs used certain flowers to give it a peculiar aroma, the Europeans used vanilla.

Black beans were much used for food. Fruits and vegetables were abundant, as they are yet in that land; for example, the mammee, banana, ahuatatl (vegetable water), tapioca, fig, sweet potato, etc. There were no cattle or goats, and so the Aztecs had neither milk nor butter. But they had turkeys and ate eggs of turkeys and turtles. They used salt, pepper and allspice with which to season. They had as a drink palm-tree wine, but *pulque* was the favorite beverage, as it is to-day among all the Mexican peasants.

When sick, the people used first their own home vegetable cures; if the patient grew worse, physicians were employed. The people themselves knew the use of sarsaparilla, gum-copal, resin, and jalap; in fact jalap, which is made of a dried root, came from Mexico, and Jalapa was named after it, because it is there where it is believed to have originated. They used vegetables for emetics, purgatives and blood-purifiers; prepared plasters, ointments and oils; practiced bleeding, and knew well how to cure wounds and sores. The arts of the physicians, or medicine-men, were accompanied with invocations, incantations and sorceries, but still they were frequently not unskilled, and often healed, although their patients usually

gave the gods that were implored the credit rather than the physicians.

Skill in the Arts.—Ordinary skill in rudimentary arts, or even a stage or two above the rudimentary, scarcely marks the difference between a barbarous and a civilized race, for some savages are experts in making weapons, weaving garments and working in stone. But the Aztecs were immeasurably in advance of any savage race in these and other matters requiring a high degree of skill and taste. Having neither iron nor steel tools, they early used flint, but soon found obsidian—a mineral of volcanic origin, common enough in Mexico—and with it made knives, razors, and even mirrors. It is of various colors and extremely hard.

In process of time they used copper and bronze, and as they knew of the beauty and uses of gold, silver and precious stones, they had many jewelers, who made the metals into ornaments, and polished the precious stones, and this they did to a wonderful degree of perfection. Some emeralds, amethysts, carnelians, and other such stones, cut and carved by Aztec jewelers, were sent to Spain by Cortés, and became famous. Their work in gold and silver, however, was equally beautiful. Cortés wrote home that Montezuma had in his collection of curios a counterfeit in gold, silver, stone, or feathers, of every natural object in his dominion, whether bird, beast or fish; and the presents made by him to Cortés are known to have embraced objects which made the Spanish soldiery

wonder, admire and envy. There were among them goblets, pictures, rings, bracelets, earrings, helmets, charms, and similar things, most precious in quality and exquisite in manufacture. Unfortunately, almost all such objects of value obtained by the Spaniards were melted down in order that they might make less bulk for shipment to Spain, and very few of them in their original designs still exist.

To illustrate the richness of some of these objects of art we note that the treasures which Montezuma gave to Cortés, counted up in *pesos de oro*,¹² and making allowance for the change in value of gold since the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, amounted to about six million three hundred thousand dollars.

Household utensils were made of clay, and the potters were peculiarly skillful in turning out those products. Weavers were numerous, using cotton, flax, hemp, and even feathers, in their weaving. They frequently spun with terra cotta spindles. They made cotton cloth of fine grade, and dyed it in various colors. Mantles and blankets were made of a mixture of cotton and feathers, so that it was almost as soft as wool. They dressed in skins of animals and birds; wove baskets and mats; plaited ropes; made boxes with lids and hinges; also tables and chairs. They had fans of feathers; also paper of the maguey plant, on which to pencil or paint their hieroglyphic records. In the art of dyeing colors they excelled the Europeans, especially in reds and purples. They made rude maps of their country,

and also many drawings and printed pictures, of animals, birds, trees, and of their kings. They made feather-pictures, however, which excelled any, perhaps, which have ever been made, and their descendants are, to-day, able to produce them in a manner to astonish the traveler, who sees them in Mexico for the first time.

Literature of the Empire.—We have seen that when Montezuma II. was crowned, it was the occasion for a speech of genuine oratorical merit. Did these early Mexican races, then, possess orators, poets and authors? They certainly did. Speechmaking, on proper official occasions, was always an Indian accomplishment. Some of the most eloquent addresses in the English language are those translated from the Indian languages of North America. The Aztecs were no exception to the general rule. They were not a loquacious people; on the contrary, were naturally sedate and quiet, especially before strangers. They rarely talked when there was nothing to say. But when the educated among them did speak, especially in public, their words read like, and often were, studied orations. Even their prayers were orations and often marvels of elaborate elocutionary effort. On festal occasions, at marriages, and in carrying on intercourse with their own officials, or in making diplomatic treaties with other nations, many and long addresses were made. Parents orated before their children in giving them advice or admonition. The children were also taught from early years to declaim the speeches of their most famous

ancestors. The compositions of poets were frequently recited in public and sometimes sung, the themes being of war, national annals, nature, and not infrequently of love.

Probably most of their literary productions they never committed to writing, but many they did write out, and a few survive. Unhappily, the Spaniards did not value records and manuscripts that they could not read, and the great bulk of Aztec composition was allowed to perish by neglect, by fire, and by the demolition of their temples and cities. Soon after Zumárraga, first bishop of Mexico, arrived in that country, by his orders a "mountain heap of them," to use his own language, were gathered up and destroyed; records and writings that would now be invaluable, as containing the thoughts of religious writers of Anáhuac and the annals of the empire. We know of five cities yielding 16,000 to the Spanish governors, who destroyed every leaf!

The country did not possess first-class artists, though they drew animals to perfection. Their drawings of human faces and landscapes were usually crude, and frequently grotesque, which, however, in the case of persons, may have been intentional.

The official records were exactly kept and full of detail, so much so that nothing of importance seemed to escape their attention in noting accounts. They made and kept tables of their kings and nobles, tax rolls, land titles, law codes, court records, calendars of days and feasts, and possessed full national annals, actual as well as tra-

ditional, in their original hieroglyphic system. Their national records were kept by the priests in the temple archives. The common people may not have been able to read, but all the educated could read. Their picture-writings were sketched, or painted, in bright colors, rapidly, by educated scribes and artists, on strips of cotton cloth, or skins, but generally on paper, the best of which was made of the leaves of the maguey, which made a paper softer than parchment. When a document was completed it was rolled, or folded up. The sheets of the picture-writing were from twelve to fifteen inches wide, and often sixty or seventy feet long. They were not rolled, but folded in squares, the last two pages being exposed to view. After thin wooden boards had been fastened to the edge of the outer page, they made a handsome appearance and would have graced a modern library. The bound books looked much like our quartos.

It is this written language, original and sufficiently perfect to declare whatever one wishes to say, which is one of the surest signs that the Aztecs had a higher degree of intellectual cultivation than any other of the nations in North or South America, except, perhaps, in Peru, of whose literary skill, however, we have less knowledge than we have of the Aztecs.

Some picture-writings all nations have had. The lowest form is mere representation of natural objects. Then come symbols: for example, several footprints, meaning a journey; an eye, meaning light; a black square, meaning

night, etc. But these are crude, and would scarcely be interpreted in any detail by a stranger to the particular tribe or people using them. The various early settlers of Asia and of the Pacific slope in America carved many such pictures and symbols on rocks and on bark, the former still existing but now untranslatable. Of a higher order come phonetic pictures, or symbols, these having some relation to *sound*, so as to make them capable of being read aloud. This should lead, ultimately, to a phonetic alphabet, which is the acme of achievement in the formation of any written language. The Aztecs did not attain that final end; the Nahua language had no real phonetic alphabet, or it would have been fully equal, in capability of written expression, to any modern language.

As to notation, they indicated small numbers up to 10 by dots; 10 by a lozenge; and all large numbers by twenties (the number of days in their month); they also had signs for squares and cubes of twenty. For example, 20 was represented by a flag; the square of 20 (400) by a feather; 20 times 400 (8000) by a purse. For convenience, these signs were halved. Thus, to write 534, would require one feather (400); one-quarter of a feather, (100); one flag, (20); one-half of a flag, (10), and four dots. This illustrates the principle and is ingenious and accurate, although we might consider it clumsy. They had no difficulty, under their scheme, to indicate either small amounts or millions.

The Nahua language, as spoken, is said to have

been "sweet and harmonious to the ears," having no sharp or nasal sounds. It is also described as "rich, exact and expressive." Bancroft (Hubert H.), after a careful study of the subject, says: "Of all the languages spoken on the American continent, the Aztec is the most perfect in finish, approaching in this respect the tongues of Europe and Asia, and actually surpassing many of them by its elegance of expression." It lacked the consonants *b, d, f, r, g,* and *s,* but the omission of these improved the musical tone of the words employed. It may interest some to note what were the letters of the language, employing, for this, of course, such English letters as exactly correspond with the sound: *a, ç, ch, e, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, t, tl, tz, u, v, x, y, z.* The words, compounded in all sorts of ways, were certainly more expressive than any other American tongue; and as to exactness, Hernandez, a Spanish naturalist (1514-'78), who traveled in Mexico fifty years after the Conquest, described twelve hundred plants, two hundred birds, and many animals, insects, etc., and had no difficulty in finding for each a special Aztec name. The longest word we have come across is one of sixteen syllables, given by Hernandez in stating the native name of one of the plants:

mihuiittilmoyoiccuitlatonpicixochitl

To give a further illustration of the Aztec language, as rendered by English spelling, we give herewith the Lord's Prayer in that language: "Totatzine ynilhuicac timoyeztica, mayectenehualo inmotocatzin, mahualauh inmotlatocayotzin

machihualo intlalticpac inmotlanequilitzin, inyuh-chichihualo inilhuicac;" which would exactly read, translating word by word—"Our revered Father,—who heaven in—art,—be praised—thy name,—may come—thy kingdom—be done—earth above—thy will—as is done—heaven in."

Manners and Customs.—The Aztecs often painted their faces with red, yellow or black paint, and also their feet; sometimes, too, the hands, neck and breasts. They loaded themselves with ornaments, including their arms, ankles, fingers, and sometimes noses and ears.

They frequently fasted, their religious laws making this necessary. Some of these fasts, however, were voluntary, in order to do penance.

Only sons inherited property, usually the first-born, but if he was considered unable to take good care of it, the father could choose another son, who was then under obligation to supply the wants of the eldest. The lands of the nation, in a sense held in common, were divided up in a certain specified way, the king taking a portion, which on the maps was marked in purple; the nobles a portion, marked in red; and the common people a portion, marked in yellow. The priests, also, had portions to be used for their maintenance. The maps were entirely clear as to who controlled this or that portion of territory, and also showed what crops could be harvested upon them, and the wild animals they contained. Cities and villages had certain portions in common. The land, as thus divided, could not be sold away.

The women were not oppressed. They were allowed to live quiet, industrious and peaceful lives, caring for their children, preparing the household food, and doing some of the lighter work of the field. A few could become priestesses, and these lived in the temples, clothed in a white garb.

There were no shops of sale in the city; everybody transacted business by sale or barter in the public markets, which were always immense enough to hold a large portion of the population.

Polygamy was permitted, not only to the kings and nobility, but to individual citizens. In the case of the latter, however, it was not practiced to any wide extent.

All the Nahuatl nations were a finely formed, well-proportioned, tall and athletic people. Their skin was of a light copper, or olive color, their hair black, thick and coarse, but glossy, their teeth regular, their foreheads low and narrow, their eyes black, and their sense of sight peculiarly acute. Being agile, they were wonderful runners. Diaz says that one Aztec courier ran from Vera Cruz and return (about 420 miles by direct way) in four days.

The dress of the ordinary native was simple and adapted to the even climate of that semi-tropical country. They all used the *maxtli*, or breechcloth, to cover the loins, and this was usually of cotton cloth, about nine inches wide and twenty-four feet long, the great length being so that it might be wound first between the legs and then around the hips, leaving the ends to hang down in

front and at the back. The ends had fancy fringes, or tassels. Men then threw over their shoulders a mantle, about four feet long, knotted under one of the arms. This mantle for wealthy people was painted and ornamented with feathers and birds.

Soon after children were born they were named, the name being chosen by their mothers, and a rite was performed which the Spaniards thought bore a striking likeness to Christian baptism. This ceremony was usually attended to by the midwife, who, in the presence of the relatives, at sunrise, set the child's face toward the west, addressing it in certain phrases of deference, and, after moistening its lips and breast with water, poured water on its head. Some of the phrases used when the water was being employed were like these: "Take this holy and pure water that thine heart may be cleansed." "Receive, O my son, the water of the Lord of the World, which is our life, with which we wash and are clean; may this celestial, light-blue water enter into thy body and there remain; may it destroy and remove from thee all evil and adverse things that were given thee before the beginning of the world." Expressive and also beautiful!

Education of Children.—Children were sent to school, or taught in the home, beginning with five years of age. They were informed, first, about the worship of the gods by prayer, including the meaning of the temple services; then the duties they owed their superiors, and the other primary virtues. They were instructed how to be modest

and virtuous, that work was ennobling, that a lie was abominable, (the tongues of the children were pricked with agave-thorns when they were detected in falsehood), and that respect for the aged was absolutely essential to correct deportment.

One of the counsels given by a parent to a child reads, in the Aztec literature, as follows: "Never lie, for it is a great sin. When thou tellest anyone what has been told thee, tell the simple truth, and add nothing thereto. Slander no one, and be silent in regard to the faults thou seest in others, if it is not thy duty to correct them. When thou takest a message, if the one who receives it flies into a passion and speaks ill of the person who sent it, in repeating his words modify their severity, in order that thou mayst not be the cause of a quarrel, nor of a scandal for which thou wouldst have to reproach thyself."

They were instructed not to talk too much, nor to speak foolishly, nor to mock at old men or deformed people, and to submit to proper punishment in silence. In other words, the cardinal virtues common to all races having high tenets of morality were first taught, and then the general education, or the trade that seemed best to befit the possessor. In this respect modern educators might take a cue from the Aztecs. Punishment of disobedient children was usually corporal, and often brutal; the whip and agave-thorn were never abolished from their schools.

There were common schools, one in each quarter of the city, for the masses, and here children were taught till the age of about fifteen, when

they were withdrawn to follow a trade or profession. Sons of the nobility, and those expecting to become priests, were sent to the college at Tezcucó, or a monastery near a temple, which was under priestly supervision. Large buildings were also annexed to the temples and used for seminaries for the girls, who, besides studying their religion, weaving, spinning, etc., also swept the temple and attended its sacred fires.

The maguey plant (known as the American aloe, or century-plant), was cultivated, and perhaps more extensively than it is to-day, when hundreds of thousands of acres of it may be seen in various parts of Mexico. It is a wonderful plant, which has been termed "the miracle of nature," growing practically on soil that would otherwise be a desert, because of want of rain. Paper was made from its leaves, and the leaves were used to thatch the dwellings of the poor; thread, and even strong cord, were made from its fibres; its thorns were used as pins and needles; the root could be employed as food; threads made from it could be woven into clothing, and its juice furnished the well-known intoxicating beverage called *pulque*, which has a peculiarly disagreeable flavor, but of which the original natives were excessively fond, as are the modern Mexicans.

Their Floating Gardens.—Much has been written of the floating gardens (*chinampas*) of the Aztecs, and, naturally, many have doubted their existence. One who now goes by boat, as the custom of tourists is, upon the canal con-

necting two of the small lakes of the valley with Lake Tezcuco, which passes directly by the City of Mexico, familiarly known as La Viga, finds at Santa Anita, and also at points beyond, what are still called floating gardens, but they do not float. It is difficult to believe they ever did. But the evidence is quite in favor of the history of the period, which states that, when all this was a marshy lake, the fibrous roots which grew on the water were employed to sustain twigs and branches thrown upon them, on which two or three feet of black earth was placed, and that in this way a real garden was constructed on top of the water, and the whole floated there as readily as a raft. The constructors, or possessors, of these gardens, moved them about at will; they were usually not over one hundred feet long. There is nothing impossible or improbable about the matter. As these marshes have long ago dried up, the floating gardens are now not even islands, but rest securely upon the main soil below.

Money and Merchandising.—Money was current, to effect sales, but none was coined. There were four kinds of money: grains of cacao, used as small change; small squares of cotton cloth; tiny nuggets of gold enclosed in duck quills; and tin, the latter somewhat in size and shape like our pieces of money. There were no weighing scales in use, everything being bought and sold by the piece or measure.

Merchants went about the country to sell their goods, but nearly always in caravans for protection from robbers. They could travel on roads,

for these were laid out all over the empire, and were repaired after sudden rains. Rivers were crossed by boats or rafts, or by long wooden and very narrow bridges, which swung like a hammock when ventured upon, yet were considered perfectly safe. Merchandise was carried on the backs of slaves. When the merchants returned from long journeys, they paid their tribute to the state, and then gave a feast to their friends. These merchants were in high repute with their sovereign, who often consulted with them as to what they had seen in their journeys, and as to events transpiring in different parts of the kingdom. They even became so powerful at court as to have been allowed to levy armies to wage war against those who had not treated them with proper respect.

Theatres and Games.—Theatres were common, the stage being a simple platform under the open sky near the market-places, or by the temples.

Public games and private sports were also common, both in the cities and smaller villages. Not the least popular of these was a game of ball, (the ball was usually made of rubber, about three inches in diameter), played in a large oblong field, enclosed with three high stone walls. The ball was not thrown with the hand, but struck with the knee, elbow, shoulder, or some other part of the body agreed upon, and, if it touched the opposite wall, or went over it, a point was scored; while if it was struck with some other part of the body, as the hand or foot, a point was lost. If it

could be driven through the centre of a hole just as large as the ball in one of the stone images of idols on the end wall, the player who succeeded in doing it not only won the game, but the clothing of all those present. It was said to be a difficult feat, rarely accomplished, and when done the player became almost as noted as were the victors in the great Olympian games in Greece. This game of ball went by the name of *tlachtli*. These and other popular open-air games were gambled upon, and they had regular referees—of priests—to settle disputes.

Last Days of the Empire.—The story of what followed the meeting of Cortés and Montezuma on that November day in 1519, when the former entered for the first time the City of Tenochtitlan, has been often told, and it is to be hoped that every reader of this volume, who has not already read it, will do so, or re-read it, to obtain the details, which are so instructive and interesting, as well as terrible. Naturally one turns to Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, as the most entertainingly interesting of any work on this sad theme. We can only note, with much brevity, the leading events in the order in which they occurred.

Cortés, as soon as he was settled, began to scheme for the conquest of the city and country, as had been his original aim. But he was not precipitate. He called upon and received calls from Montezuma, and, in the meantime, carefully studied the situation. He urged Montezuma to adopt the Christian religion, and also suggested that he should become a vassal to the

Spanish king, Charles,¹⁴ whom he represented as having actual jurisdiction over Anáhuac. Montezuma refused both offers, though at first he seemed to vacillate over them, as if uncertain of his duty and full of fears. The people became petulant at his indecision, and made it known so openly that Montezuma said, No. Cortés feared trouble would follow from the people, and so put on an imperative air. He went to Montezuma's palace and charged him with perfidy, and demanded that, as proof of his good-will, the king should put his person in the hands of the Spaniards, nominally to be a hostage, but actually to continue his official rank and to remain ruler. The Aztec monarch reluctantly acquiesced, but not until threats of imprisonment by force had been made; left his palace, and went to reside with the Spaniards in their quarters. He was really a prisoner, and Cortés was practically king.

Cortés was now obliged to leave the city for a brief period in order to defend himself against a new arrival of troops from Cuba under Narvaez, who had been sent over by Velasquez to find Cortés and take away his authority. He went, defeated the troops, and then added them as a new army of six hundred men to his own troops, returning with them to Tenochtitlan. During his absence the general left in charge, Alvarado, had committed a grave indiscretion. He had gone with some soldiers to the Great Teocalli on a festival night, and slaughtered a number of Aztecs engaged in the festival. The whole population

had arisen and besieged the Spaniards in their quarters.

Cortés arrived just in time to get to the garrison and take command, but even his presence was scarcely sufficient to avert a calamity. He endeavored to secure peace, but failed. The people were indignant at Montezuma for allowing himself to become a prisoner, instead of driving out the "white strangers," and they met and elected Cuitlahuatzin, brother of Montezuma, as their leader, who carried on an offensive warfare and was afterward made king. Cortés, to win over the people, had Montezuma taken to the top of the headquarters, that he might be seen to be a free man and not a prisoner, and to address the people. He made a pitiful appeal for quiet and the restoration of peace, but one of the onlooking throng sent an arrow, which struck Montezuma in the head, and in a few days he was dead. The rumor quickly spread abroad that he had been poisoned.

The death of Montezuma occurred on June 30, 1520, after the Spaniards had been seven months in Tenochtitlan.

Cortés promptly decided he must abandon the city, as, while he had used his abode as a fortification, and might hold out for some time, he saw that eventually his troops must all perish, as he was short of ammunition and provisions. Accordingly, the next day, July 1, at night, he undertook to leave the city. When in front of where now stands the Church of San Hipólito, amid darkness and heavy rain, he was suddenly attacked

on every side. A terrific struggle ensued, and it is computed that Cortés lost in that one night by death and wounds, and by prisoners taken by the Aztecs, four hundred and fifty of his Spanish troops, twenty-six horses, and four thousand Tlascalcan allies. The Aztecs lost far more, but they could replenish their losses, while he could not.

That night is known in Mexican history as "La Noche Triste" ("The Melancholy Night"), and the spot where Cortés sat down at the end of the struggle, under a wide-spreading tree,—it is said to weep,—is still marked by the same gnarled old cypress, which is now standing in forlorn magnificence. It is some sixty feet in circumference, and is, probably, to-day, at least a thousand years old. The next day the captured Spaniards were immolated on the Great Teocalli, in full sight of Cortés and his remaining army.

The Spaniards succeeded in reaching a fortified hill, twelve miles from Tenochtitlan, took possession of it by driving away the natives in charge, and here recuperated. In a week's time they again set out, and at Otumba, thirty-five miles from Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs came up in great force and gave battle. Cortés won, and then proceeded on to Tlascala, where he was well-received, and where he remained about four months. On December 24, with an abundance of stores of ammunition and provisions, he set out to recapture the capital with an army of 700 infantry, 118 arquebusiers, 86 horses, and more than 100,000 Tlascalans. Reaching the city of Tezcuco, he made a league with its chieftain, who was not

then on good terms with the Aztec king, and who furnished him with many additional men. Other tribes around about contributed to the army; it is said to the number of 50,000 men. Here Cortés constructed brigantines, and with these, and some 16,000 Tezcucan canoes, he rowed across Lake Tezcuco to attack Tenochtitlan from the lake.

In the meantime, Cuitlahuatzin had died of smallpox a few weeks after becoming king, and was succeeded by Cuauhtemoc ("Swooping eagle"), usually known as Guatemotzin, who had married the daughter of Montezuma, and was a most popular warrior. In fact, because of his subsequent conduct, his name has remained so popular among the Mexicans that to-day a magnificent monument to his memory stands on the fine boulevard leading from the City of Mexico to Chapultepec, while an enormous bust of him adorns the bank of the Viga canal, in the suburbs of the city. Guatemotzin was in charge of the defence of the capital and proved to be a superb general.

All that spring and summer the Spaniards besieged and bombarded the city, making of it almost a heap of ruins, but still Guatemotzin defended it against the besiegers. It was a frightful combat, in which Cortés lost heavily, and the loss of the Aztecs from all causes was computed at 120,000. After eight months, on August 13, 1521, the end came; Guatemotzin was captured in a canoe as he was making flight from the city, and the city capitulated. This day marked the close of the Aztec empire.

After the Surrender.—Tenochtitlan was so desolated of people, and so destroyed by the bombardment, that Cortés did not try to live in it, but was obliged to rebuild it from end to end. He went to Coyoacan, and made his residence, or “palace,” there in the town hall, a building which stands to this day. He cleansed Tenochtitlan by burning the dead and clearing the streets, and set to work to lay out a new city, which he intended should vie with the best cities of Spain in its broad streets, (he first filled up the canal with the *débris*), fine churches and more modern buildings. He only partially succeeded in this in his lifetime, but from that year Tenochtitlan was a thing of the past, and the City of Mexico became both a name and a reality.

The Great Teocalli had been destroyed with the other temples and buildings. On the ruins of the former, or just beside them, a site was set apart for a Christian temple, and it is now covered by the present grand Cathedral, whose corner-stone was laid in 1573, and which was finished in 1667, except the towers which were completed in 1791.

Guatemotzin was kept a prisoner, or under strict surveillance, for more than three years, after having undergone torture to disclose what he had done with Montezuma's wealth of gold and silver. He bravely endured it, declaring finally that he had thrown it in Lake Tezcucó, which was probably not true, as it was there searched for in vain. Cortés, in the meantime, was confirmed by the King of Spain in all his

authority and rights, and was made governor, captain-general and chief justice.

In 1525, Cortés led an army to Central America to quell a supposed rebellion, all the rest of the Aztec kingdom having immediately made terms, after the fall of Tenochtitlan, and become a part of New Spain. He arrived there, however, only to find everything peaceful. On this journey Guatemotzin was accused, probably upon no just grounds, of conspiracy to overthrow Cortés, and was summarily put to death, at Tabasco,¹⁵ by being hung upon a cypress tree. He was only about twenty-eight years of age at the time of his death, and the event has been deplored by all who have studied the life of Cortés as another stain upon his character as a ruler.

We do not propose to follow the history of Cortés further, except to say that he was subsequently obliged to go to Spain to defend his character and met the accusations successfully; that he made other expeditions of discovery in the Pacific coast as far north as California; and that he was presented by Charles V. with an immense estate at Cuernavaca, forty miles south of the City of Mexico, and there, as a landed estate owner, in buildings which still stand, he spent the last three years of his residence in Mexico. He gave up his Doña Marina to be married to one of his officers, Don Juan Xaramillo, assigning her estates in her native province; took back his own wife, whom he had left in Cuba, and who had come to Mexico (but she speedily died, his enemies said from poison); went back to Spain,

and, near Seville, died, December 2, 1547, in the sixty-third year of his age, twenty-eight years after he set out from Cuba to conquer the land of Anáhuac.

The Aztecs After the Conquest.—The history of the Aztecs as a people, after the fall of Tenochtitlan, is one of complete subjugation to a foreign race. No serious attempt, headed by any recognized leader, was ever made by them to overthrow the Spanish domination, until it was too late to restore the Aztecs as a race to any control of the institutions and laws of their country. They were subdued, terrorized, and glad to be able to enjoy what little allotments of land were permitted them, on which to obtain their living.

Within three years after the Conquest, twelve Franciscans, often called "The Twelve Apostles," arrived; two years later Dominican monks came; and, seven years later still, seven Augustinian monks; and more soon followed. They revolutionized the religious habits of the people, and everywhere built churches, all in a time so brief that it seems like an arranged human drama. So little hold did Sun and Idol worship have upon the natives—though, of course, the change was superinduced by great show of force and confiscations of property—that the country was thoroughly Catholic in a few decades, and, to-day, traditions of their ancient religion scarcely exist among the two millions of full-blooded Aztec descendants in Mexico, who continue to speak the Nahuatl language, but not in its purity. Occasionally, however, a traveler, who enters some lonely

spot, like a cave, or a mountain summit, reports that a native has been met with there silently gazing upon some inherited, or newly-discovered, small idol—one which he has carried with him to, or has found on the spot—and has, perhaps, said to it some silent prayer.

Viceroyalty were appointed by the king of Spain, who were often cruel, and often conspired against. Even the Inquisition was established in 1570, for the burning of Spanish heretics in Mexico, but, fortunately, Indians were unmolested, probably because they had not the courage to care what they believed, so long as they were left alone. New cities were built, vast aqueducts constructed, more and better roads opened, stone viaducts and bridges put up, gold, silver and iron mining carried on with vigor, and the noble forests were cut down for their wealth of beautiful woods, which were sent to Spain to be used in buildings and the arts.

A tremendous change, local and national, religious and civil, came at once over the land. Seeds were sown for future revolutions, but they were rather of Spaniards against Spaniards, instead of tribes against tribes. A large foreign population poured in, of office-holders, priests, merchants, fakirs, speculators and vagabonds. We cannot tell the story, for it would embrace the whole history of a turbulent colony of Spain for three hundred years.

Finally, in 1824-'25, the native populations, only partly Spanish, completely put aside the power of Spain itself, and became a free and inde-



Modern Descendants of the Aztecs.



"Last of the Aztecs"—Country Life To-day.

pendent people, under the title of "The Republic of Mexico."

The Aztecs of To-day.—To-day the two millions of Aztecs in Mexico do not exist as a separately named people among the many Indian inhabitants of the Republic. Intermixed with other natives and Spaniards, they are a degenerate and mixed-up race, with a name only in history and literature. Shorter of stature than their ancestors, often beautiful in physique, usually cheerful, exceedingly patient, devoted to the Catholic religion with a faithfulness that puts to shame the adherents of other religions, content to live in a peaceful, humdrum, uneventful way, they are likely to pass gradually off the stage of action in the next few centuries from sheer deterioration and racial decay. Sad that it is so, but not strange, for the march of the general human race forward is accompanied everywhere with death and destruction, and no man living can predict what the future of any particular race or nation will be five centuries hence.

As one stands now upon the top of one of the two tall towers of the Cathedral in the City of Mexico, he can see, white-mantled in snow, the identical and towering summits of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl that the subjects of Montezuma feared and revered. He can view in the distance the glistening waters of Lake Tezcuco, shrunken far from its former boundaries, but still the same lake that floated the brigantines of Cortés, when he returned on his final successful endeavor to overthrow Tenochtitlan. He can put

eyes on the summit of Chapultepec, once the royal abode and burial-place of the Aztec kings, now crowned by the Military Academy of Mexico and the Summer Palace of President Diaz. He can count up all the peaks, and can impress upon his memory for all aftertime the curved outlines of the grand array of mountains that girt the whole wide Valley of Mexico; the same that have stood there since the Creator marshaled them in their orderly array. He will look upon miles and miles of verdant thatches of alfalfa, groups of grazing cattle, and everywhere hamlets and villages of wealthy and prosperous residents. By day, just as of yore, the same sun shines overhead. By night the same pale moon and stars, the same Pleiades and Southern Cross¹⁶ "shed radiance mild" over the ghostly landscape, as in the times of the Aztec kings, temples and priests. He may breathe the same glorious atmosphere, clear as the purest crystal, wind-tossed, surcharged with life, invigorating, inspiring, intoxicating, that charmed the high priests of the Great Teocalli on this identical spot. But the grand old forests of oak and cypress have disappeared. The lakes are without canoes, or stir of life. Only the busy city below, with its bustling throngs, bursts in upon the wide-round silence. Here there are strange new faces of modern men and women, mingling with stranger examples of curious remaining natives.

The Aztecs of old have gone—who knows where?—perhaps to continents, or sea-washed islands, immeasurably larger than any mansions in the Sun!

NOTES ON THE TEXT.

¹It has been stated that "the Japanese in the United States unhesitatingly accept the American Indians, on the evidence of their faces, and their beliefs and ceremonies, as people of the same race with themselves." We have repeatedly noticed, while in Mexico, the resemblance in general appearance between the modern Aztecs and the Japanese, especially among the women, and, have, therefore, a strong belief that somewhere between these two races in ancient times there must have been a close connecting link.

²The fullest account of this voyage of discovery is to be found in Da Costa's *Pre-Columbian Discovery of America*, Albany, 1901. The known facts as to the early voyages to Greenland and "Vinland" will be presented in a subsequent volume in this "Library."

³Francisco Hernandez de Cordova (1475-1526) sailed along the coast of Yucatan, and, while the land itself had been seen by previous Spanish sailors, he was the first to put foot on its soil.

⁴To be exact, Cortés had with him, on arrival at Vera Cruz, only this small army: 553 infantry, 16 horsemen and their horses, 110 sailors, and 200 Cuban Indians. He also had ten large cannon, and four lighter guns called falconets.

⁵Prescott says Montezuma was "thirty-four," which would indicate his birth-date as 1485. Another equally good authority says 1476. Oth-

ers give other dates. But as Bernal Diaz, who was with Cortés, and who must have made inquiries on the spot, says he was born in 1479, we have adopted his date.

⁶The Aztecs had three kinds of tobacco, and smoked pipes and used cigarettes. All the American tribes, from the northwest of the present United States to Patagonia, seem to have known of it and of its use, and some of them used snuff.

⁸The population of Tenochtitlan in 1519 will never be known. Some writers put it as low as 20,000, which we think is absurd. It could not have been less than 100,000 and was probably more.

⁹Pronounced by the Aztecs *Meshitl*, because the *x* in Mexitl, (or in Mexico) would have the sound of *sh*.

¹⁰The papyrus spoken of refers to the paper made from the maguey, or aloe, plant; not the papyrus plant known to the Egyptians.

¹¹It is not certain, but only probable, that the Aztec year began on Feb. 2.

¹²"*Pesos de oro*" means the gold peso, which is, to-day, in U. S. currency, worth a fraction less than twenty cents.

¹⁴Charles V. (1500-1558) was also "Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire." He was made king of Spain in 1516, as Charles I.; became emperor of the larger empire in 1519. He abdicated the throne of Spain in 1556 to his son, Philip II. He was king of Spain during all the time of Cortés in Mexico.

¹⁵Tabasco is now a state of Mexico. It is in the extreme southeastern end of Mexico, adjoining Guatemala.

¹⁶The famous constellation of the Southern Hemisphere is visible as far north as Mexico during certain seasons of the year.



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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.

EARLIER YEARS.

Toltecs founded Tula.....	A. D. 648
Toltecs left Tula.....	1051
Aztecs left Aztlan.....	1090
Reform of Aztec calendar.....	1091
Aztecs arrived at Chicomozttec, Mexico...	1116
Aztecs reached Tula.....	?
Aztecs at Chapultepec.....	1194
Aztecs on Island of Tizaapan.....	1297
Aztecs at Coyoacan.....	1300
Aztecs founded Tenochtitlan.....	1325

AZTEC KINGS OF TENOCHTITLAN (1350-1519).

First king, Acamapichtli II.....	1350
Second king, Huitzilihuitl II.....	1403
Third king, Chimalpopoca.....	1417
Fourth king, Itzcoatl.....	1428
Fifth king, Motecahzoma (Montezuma) I.	1440
Sixth king, Axayacatl.....	1469
Seventh king, Tizoc.....	1481
Eighth king, Ahuitzotl.....	1486
Great Teocalli dedicated.....	1486, or 1487
Ninth king, Motecahzoma (Montezuma)	
II.	1503
Last festival of Aztec Cycle.....	1506

EVENTS AFTER ARRIVAL OF SPANIARDS.

Cortés landed at Vera Cruz....	April 21, 1519
Cortés entered Tenochtitlan..	November 8, 1519

Tenth king, Cuitlahuatzin.....	1520
Cortés driven from Tenochtitlan... July 1,	1520
Eleventh king, Guatemotzin.....	1520
Tenochtitlan capitulated; end of Aztec Empire	August 13, 1521
Death of Cortés, aged 62 years.....	December 2, 1547



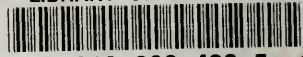
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